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*THE OLD ORDER CHANGES*

VOL. I.

PRINTED BY  
SPOTTISWOODE AND CO., NEW-STREET SQUARE  
LONDON

# THE OLD ORDER CHANGES

A Novel

BY

W. H. MALLOCK

AUTHOR OF 'IS LIFE WORTH LIVING?' 'SOCIAL EQUALITY' ETC.

'Cette importune économie politique se glisse partout et se mêle à tout, et je crois vraiment que c'est elle qui a dit, *nihil humani a me alienum puto*'—BASTIAT

IN THREE VOLUMES

VOL. I.



LONDON

RICHARD BENTLEY & SON, NEW BURLINGTON STREET

Publishers in Ordinary to Her Majesty the Queen

1886

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# BOOK I.

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VOL. I.

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## CHAPTER I.

‘R. CAREW, tell me. Do we ever meet without getting on this question? We discussed it the night before you left London. I only came across you again yesterday afternoon; and see, already we are once more in the middle of it.’

‘It is the only question,’ said Carew, ‘that to me has any practical interest. If our old landed aristocracy ever come to an end, *my* England will have come to an end also; and I shall buy a château in some Hungarian forest. I should not be leaving my country :

my country would have left me. You don't understand me—perhaps I shall never make you. In these social discussions what stands in our way is this : there are so many things which it is very vulgar to say, and which yet at the same time it is vulgar not to feel. However, Mrs. Harley, at a more convenient season, vulgar or not vulgar, I shall come back to my point."

'Very well,' she answered, as she looked at him with a smile of amusement. 'But never—I tell you beforehand—you will never make me a convert. I'm sure,' she went on as the idea suddenly struck her, 'if a stranger overheard us discussing vulgarity here, he would think the subject of our conversation a little out of keeping with the scene of it.'

This observation was certainly not unjustified. They were standing by the side of a lofty mountain road, with a bank of savage rocks abruptly rising behind them, and a



weather-stained crucifix, almost lost in the gathering shadows, was stretching its arms over them with a cold forlorn solemnity.

The lady was a handsome woman in the girlhood of middle age. The man was apparently some few years younger ; if not handsome, he had a certain air of distinction ; and his face was shadowed, if not lit up, by thought. A few paces away from them two other men were standing ; and the pair of disputants, as they brought their discussion to a close, by common consent moved forward and joined their companions. One of these last, so far as appearances went, was remarkable chiefly for the extreme shabbiness of his dress, coupled somewhat incongruously with a look of the completest self-satisfaction. The other, on the contrary, was the very picture of neatness, from his well-trimmed beard to his hand with its sapphire ring. It was at once evident that he was the lady's husband.

‘Listen George,’ she said, laying her hand on his arm. ‘As the carriage is so long in coming, I shall go back and sit in it till the coachman sees fit to start ; and you, gentlemen, I shall leave you here to look at the view until I pick you up. No, don’t stir, any one of you ; I would rather go alone. If you must know the truth, I am the least bit sleepy, and shall do my best to close my eyes for a minute.’ And with a slight but decided wave of the hand, she moved away from them with a firm and elastic step, and was presently lost to view behind an angle of the descending road.

The three men who were thus left to themselves did as they had been told to do, and inspected the view in silence. It was certainly worth the trouble. On either side, and below them, forests of pine and olive fell like a silent cataract over the enormous slopes of the mountains, and, rising again from innumerable

dells and gorges, seemed to pour themselves over pigmy promontories into the faint sea below. Meanwhile the sky overhead was clear, and was already pierced by one or two keen stars, and leagues of a red sunset were lying along the aërial sea-line. It was a scene which at any time would have been striking enough to the imagination, and it was doubly striking now in this soft and deepening twilight. But what mainly gave it its peculiar and romantic character was one solitary object which appeared to dominate everything, as it faced the road from the opposite side of a hollow. This was an isolated and precipitous rock which, rising abruptly out of a sea of foliage, lifted high into the air a dim cluster of buildings. A stranger might have been tempted to ask whether such a seemingly inaccessible eagle's nest could be in reality a collection of human structures at all, and whether what looked like houses, towers, and ramparts were more than

spikes of crag or scars on the bare cliff. The questioner, however, had he cared to look steadily, would have at once been answered by some wreaths of ascending smoke ; and still more conclusively by the sudden note of the Angelus, which in a few moments vibrated from a domed belfry. It was a singular cracked sound, but it was not unmusical ; rather it was like music in ruins, and it filled the mind with a vague sense of remoteness—a remoteness both of time and place.

‘ I expect,’ said Carew, in a tone of dreamy soliloquy, as if it had acted on him like a kind of mental tuning-fork—‘ I expect that a stranger of any kind is a rare apparition here, and, judging from the road, a carriage one rarer still. Look at these loose stones. They tell their own tale plainly enough. Little disturbs them from year’s end to year’s end, but the peasants’ boots and the hoofs of the peasants’ mules. Listen : at this moment there

are mule-bells tinkling somewhere, and here come some of the very peasants themselves.' As he spoke a procession of sombre figures, in clusters of twos and threes, slowly emerged out of the twilight, and defiled past them towards the foot of the old town. They were men with slouch hats and shy glancing eyes. Some of them bore on their backs burdens of some kind ; others were driving by their side a fantastic shaggy goat ; and presently those descending were met by another procession—a small caravan of heavily-laden mules with their conductors. Carew stared at these visions as they gradually melted out of sight ; and then with a smile, turning round to his friends, ' Are they really men,' he said, ' or ghosts out of the middle ages ? '

' Upon my word,' said Harley, ' one does in a place like this very nearly forget in what century one is living. Railways and intelligent voters seem little more than a dream.

The old town on the hill, as we see it now against the sky, is just like a single huge castle, the stronghold of some robber baron. There is only one thing wanting to make the effect complete, and that is for the baron himself to suddenly appear with his men, seize on our friend Stonehouse here, and send us two back for the ransom.'

The shabby man, who had hitherto remained perfectly silent, being thus alluded to, took a glance at his threadbare waistcoat, and plucking out a button that was hanging on by a thread, jerked it away with a smile of amused indifference. 'I am afraid,' he said, 'that the robber baron would find a very poor capture in me. I have, unless I happen to have dropped it, exactly four francs and fifteen centimes in my pocket, and Carew's scarf-pin or our excellent Harley's watch-chain would buy me up as I stand ten times over. My dear fellows, I am the happy *vacuus viator* ;



and as I intend to walk part of the way back, you will no doubt think it lucky for me that I am. But, bless my soul,' he exclaimed, suddenly facing round with a small prim smile of minute but condescending interest, 'what the deuce can be coming now? I doubt if we have this seclusion so completely to ourselves as we thought we had.'

What had caught his attention, and that of the two others also, was a sound of wheels and horses, evidently approaching them—not up the hill, as their own carriage would have done, but down it; and in another moment a sight presented itself which, considering the place and hour, might well cause some surprise in them. This was a large open landau, with a servant on the box by the coachman, which was descending the road slowly with a lumbering and uneasy caution, and the body of which, to make matters the more strange, was seen, as it passed, to be altogether empty.

There were, however, a number of wraps and cloaks dimly visible upon the cushions, and amongst them, in particular, the glimmer of a white shawl. The three men watched it go by in silence, and then broke out together into expressions of conjecture and astonishment.

Presently the shabby man, with a gesture of grave facetiousness, exclaimed, ‘Of course—I know what it is exactly. It is the chariot of some *milor* who is making the grand tour. We shall very soon see another carriage following it, with the baggage, the lady’s-maid, the valet, the courier, and the blunderbuss. My dear Harley, you are perfectly right. One could almost fancy one was one’s own great-grandfather.’

‘Carew,’ said Harley, ‘devoutly wishes he was. Look at him! His eyes have gone back again to the old town and its battlements; and he is meditating over those coats of arms which he found above the castle gateway.’



The shabby man turned to Carew with a lazy stare of amusement, which, though perfectly good-natured, was only not impertinent because it happened to be not fixed on a stranger. 'Are you a herald,' he said, 'amongst your other many accomplishments? How droll now! How excessively droll!'

'I am a herald only,' said Carew, with a slight dryness of manner, 'in matters of family history. With the shields of which Harley speaks I was interested for a peculiar reason. We, in the seventeenth century, were connected by a marriage with the Lascaris, who were once seigneurs in this part of the country; and I was pleased to find above one of those mouldering arches two of the quarterings which are above our own lodge gates at Otterton to-day.'

'Indeed!' said Harley. 'Otterton is a very interesting, fine old place, isn't it?'

‘It is,’ said Carew; ‘only two-thirds of it are in ruins.’

‘This,’ went on Harley, ‘about the coats of arms, is really extremely interesting——’

The shabby man, however, did not appear to think so, and ignoring the information as though it were some unsuccessful joke, he placidly interposed with an air of subdued banter :

‘My dear Carew, now can you tell me what a chevron is, or a pellet? I am really immensely anxious to know something about a pellet.’

‘Carew,’ said Harley, in his turn ignoring the interruption, ‘is exceedingly fortunate in his number of foreign relations. There are his Milanese cousins, who have offered him, during the spring, their beautiful island villa on the Lago Maggiore; and his French cousins, who have actually lent him the château where he is now.’

‘A château!’ exclaimed the shabby man, at once showing a little attention. ‘You don’t mean to say that you are living in a château?’

‘Didn’t you know?’ said Harley. ‘This lucky Carew has a castle amongst the mountains, lent him for the winter by his relation, the Comte de Courbon-Loubet. It’s a genuine castle, with ramparts, tower, and scutcheons, and heaven knows what else; and it has a bed in it in which Francis the First slept. So at least I discover in Murray’s Guide Book.’

The smile of the shabby man by a subtle change now turned into one of more or less serious interest. ‘A château in France!’ he exclaimed, ‘and a villa on an Italian lake! Upon my word it’s a finer thing than I thought to have a French count and an Italian marquis for one’s cousins. But I only hope,’ he added with a little inward chuckle, ‘that

you won't be getting into trouble with any more French countesses.'

Whatever this allusion may have meant, Carew did not seem much pleased with it, and contracted his brows slightly. The shabby man, whose eyes were sharp as a needle, detected this at once ; and in a tone of voice that was somewhat like a slight pat on the shoulder, said, changing the subject, ' My dear Carew, one of these fine mornings I must drive over and breakfast with you.'

' Do,' said Carew ; and he was beginning some further civility, when the sound of wheels and horses was once more audible, coming this time up the hill and not down it.

' Here,' exclaimed the shabby man, with an almost childish satisfaction—' here is our carriage at last ! I was beginning to get a little bit in a fidget about the time ; and—let me breathe it in your ear—I am also positively ravenous.'

His satisfaction, however, proved to be premature. A carriage indeed it was which was now ascending ; but it was not their own: it was the other which had just passed them, and which was now returning, by the way it came, with its company. This proved to consist of an elderly gentleman, seated with his back to the horses, and two ladies opposite to him, one of whom seemed to be about the same age as himself, whilst the other was so muffled to the eyes in a soft white shawl that it was difficult, at a first glance, to form any conjecture about her. But, as she gradually drew nearer to the group at the roadside, above the cloud of the soft white shawl there became distinguishable a cloud of soft fair hair, and also a delicate hand that held the shawl against her lips. This became distinguishable, and something more than this—the glance of a pair of eyes, which at once, in spite of the twilight, sent a curious thrill

through at least one of the party before he was clearly aware what it was that had caused it.

Carew—for it was he who had found himself thus susceptible—had just become conscious of this singular and unexpected excitement, when, as the carriage was in the act of passing him, some light object fell from it, dropped by one of the occupants. In an instant he had stepped forward and rescued it, and, with his hand on the door, was presenting it—it was a fan—to whoever might be the owner. A word of pleasure in English escaped from the elder lady, who then proceeded to tender her thanks in French. The former, however, was plainly her own language ; and Carew was pleased to show her he was a fellow countryman as he expressed a hope that the fan had not been broken. Meanwhile his eyes, under the kindly cover of the twilight, had sought those

of her companion, and had not sought them in vain. He was one of those happy men who can look at a woman fixedly without the least air of impertinence ; and the woman he was looking at now seemed possessed of the yet rarer faculty, that of returning such a look without the least air of immodesty. In her eyes, as they fixed on his with all their soft fulness, there was not only an abandonment to the impressions and feelings of the moment, but mixed with the tenderness of a woman there was the steadfast frankness of a child.

Such a silent conversation between the two perfect strangers could, of course, under the circumstances, last a few moments only ; but by the time the carriage had again moved on Carew could have imagined that it had been an affair of hours. He felt as if he had been having some new experience, as if he had suddenly had a vision of some enchanting country in May—a land blooming with lilacs



and hawthorns, its air breathing with all the longing of spring—a land of promise which filled him with the desire of exploring it. In an instant he was sunk deep in a reverie ; and so strangely jealous had he unconsciously become of the subject of it, that he felt, and even showed, some slight irritation when Harley remarked to him, ‘What a handsome girl that was!’ To this he replied with little more than a grunt, and was then suffered to enjoy a brief respite of silence ; but before many minutes his thoughts were again distracted, and for the time being their train was finally broken, by a sharp crunching sound of something being cracked close to him. This sound proved to proceed from the shabby man, who was beguiling the time and taking the edge off his appetite by eating a gingerbread nut. A few brown crumbs were still clinging to his lips, and as soon as he saw that Carew had noticed him, he produced another



from amongst the folds of his pocket-handkerchief, and holding it out, said, with his mouth full, 'Have one?'

The offer being declined, he bit a large crescent out of it himself, and then went back to a point he had before touched upon—the lateness of the carriage and his own impatience in consequence. He was at last relieving his feelings by saying to Harley, 'I am afraid that this robber baron we have all heard so much about, has seized on it and carried it off—it, with your wife into the bargain,' when both made their appearance, and set his agitation at rest.

As soon as the party were settled, and had begun to move on, Carew asked Mrs. Harley if she had seen the interesting strangers. Mrs. Harley had; but she had not much to tell him about them, except that their carriage had met them at the foot of the old town, and that they must have walked down to it from the road above, through the olive woods. The

conversation then turned to the old town itself ; and Harley alluded to Carew's curious discovery — that of a 'family scutcheon,' he said, 'under the marquis's coronet on the gateway.' The shabby man, meanwhile, had been sunk in a placid silence, but this last remark suddenly roused his attention ; and with an animation surprising in one who professed such an ignorance of heraldry, 'My dear Harley,' he said, 'that was not a marquis's coronet at all ; it was the coronet of a French vicomte, which is a very different thing.' This was all he said till the rough road they had been ascending at last joined a magnificent beaten highway ; and here, as the horses were just quickening their pace, he startled the coachman with a sudden call to stop.

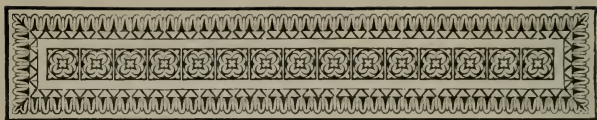
'What on earth is the matter ?' Mrs. Harley inquired of him.

'Well,' he said, 'much as I dislike to leave this exceedingly pleasant carriage, I am obliged


to get out here, and walk down by a mule path, through these terrific forests, to the little railway station which lies directly under us. I shall just catch the train, and my servant will meet me with a portmanteau. I arrive in that way forty minutes sooner than I should if I allowed myself the pleasure of being driven to Nice by you.'

Mrs. Harley was full of surprised remonstrances. 'Surely,' she ended by saying, 'you can't be in such a hurry as all that?'

'The truth is,' said the other, who was by this time in the road, 'I am engaged to dine to-night with my friend the Grand Duke at Mentone; and as to time, upon these occasions I am always most punctilious. Besides,' he added just as he was saying good-bye, 'besides'—and he laid his finger on his nose with a kind of solemn waggery—'you will observe that I save seventy-five centimes on my railway-ticket.'



## CHAPTER II.

‘HO,’ exclaimed Mrs. Harley, as the figure of the shabby man disappeared from them, ‘would take him for the heir to one of the richest dukedoms in England?’

‘Stonehouse,’ said her husband, smiling, ‘always amuses me. Life in general he seems to regard as a kind of vulgar joke, which assumes a classical character when embodied in a great magnate like himself.’

‘I,’ said Carew, ‘should be the last person to abuse him; for on one occasion, with his shrewdness, he was an excellent friend to

me. You remember, Mrs. Harley, the trouble I had with my uncle when he took it into his head I was going to marry that French lady. It was Stonehouse entirely who managed to put things right for me. Still I must say this of him, and I don't mean it for a compliment. Though he may not look to a stranger like the typical heir to a dukedom, to all who know him he is the very type of a modern Whig—I mean,' Carew added, 'a Whig who is shrewd enough to see his position, and has no desire to hide what he sees from his friends.'

'I'm sure,' said Mrs. Harley, 'you, with your strong feelings about family, ought to find in Lord Stonehouse a man after your own heart. No one has those feelings more strongly than a genuine Whig.'

'There,' said Carew, 'is the very point where you miss my meaning. It is perfectly true that, as his father's heir, no one sets a

higher, though a less imaginative, value on himself than does Stonehouse ; but of family feeling, in my sense of the words, he has nothing, or next to nothing. His family is for him not so much a family as a firm, which has been established so many years, and has so many millions of capital. I was amused just now to discover this in him—his knowledge of heraldry ends with the shape of his own coronet ; and by the way, Harley, he was perfectly wrong when he tried to correct you about the coronet on the castle gate. That was the coronet, not of a French vicomte, but of a *maréchal* of France, which, seen at a distance, is very like that of a *marquis*. It has eight parsley leaves with a pearl between each, whereas the other is simply charged with four large pearls. I think it is four——’

‘ Really, Mr. Carew,’ broke in Mrs. Harley, ‘ you remind me of a treatise on heraldry there used to be in my father’s library, which began

by saying that *hardly a subject existed more worthy of the attention of princes and of gentlemen than the origin of those titles and dignities which distinguish them from the rest of mankind.*'

Carew laughed good-naturedly. 'My dear Mrs. Harley,' he said, 'I'm not quite such a fool about these things as you think me. I may be prejudiced, but I don't think I'm insane. As for heraldic signs, of course they are signs merely. Is our national flag more? That, in itself, is merely a rag of canvas. You may call it a scarecrow, or you may die for it. A coat of arms—I don't mean one supplied by the coachmaker—is for each family which is worth calling a family, the Union Jack of its own past : and what I am saying of Stonehouse and Whigs like him is, that for their past, as their past, they have no feeling whatever.'

'My dear Mr. Carew,' interposed Mrs.



Harley, ' what is it but their past which keeps men like Lord Stonehouse from going over to the Conservatives ? '

' They merely feel,' said Carew, ' like a true trading firm, that they would lose, if they did, the good-will of their political business ; as a grocer would if he suddenly turned shoemaker. No doubt the Whigs value their past in one way. They know that it has a power over the opinions of others, and that it helps to surround them with a certain ready-made deference. Of course in this way it adds to their own self-importance, but only as might the possession of some remote ancestral castle, which they like to possess but have no inclination to visit. They are proud to think of it as a celebrated show-place which oppresses the imagination of the tourist, but which never elevates the imagination of the owner. It speaks *for* them, but it does not speak *to* them. They don't listen for the voice which



haunts, if they would only hear it, every mouldering turret and every gnarled oak-tree; the voice which whispers to them that they are different from the rest of the world, not because they are rich, but that they are rich (if they happen to be so) because they are different from the rest of the world. It is only people to whom the past conveys this feeling who really know the meaning of the words *Noblesse oblige*.'

'If you are talking about Lord Stonehouse,' said Mrs. Harley, 'you are very possibly right. You know him far better than I do. But about the Whigs in general I am quite sure you are wrong. Look at the ——'s, look at the ——'s, look at the ——'s. No one—not the most bigoted Tory in England—for bad and for good both, is more closely wedded than they are to this gratifying feeling you speak of.'

'Well,' said Carew, with a certain vindic-

tive energy, 'if they are wedded to it, they keep their wife locked up; and they never speak in public without denying the marriage. However,' he went on, 'as I said just now, we will have all this out more fully some day. It shall be when you come to see me at my castle among the mountains. I am longing to show you that. Everything about us will be on my side there, and will explain my meaning, and I think make you agree with it—at all events partly. The old village still clings to the shelter of the feudal ramparts. In the valley below you look down on the lord's mill, whose black wheel still turns in the blue-green snow-water. The villagers all touch their hats to you and seem proud of your presence. For miles round every hectare belongs to the House of Courbon-Loubet. The *concierge* delights in pointing out to a stranger certain of the scutcheons in the courtyard, and telling him that Monsieur le Comte

has Bourbon blood in his veins ; and there is a huge five-sided tower, that still stands erect and stares at the landscape with all its old effrontery. Indeed, if it were not for a glimpse of the railway which that tower gives you, you could fancy that you were living before the French Revolution. Now, Mrs. Harley, when are you coming to see me, and leave the epoch of progress and the sovereign people behind you? Will you come next week? Do! I am expecting some friends then. You probably know them all; and I am quite sure you will like them.'

Mrs. Harley's eyes had been watching Carew curiously, with a mixed expression of interest, of dissent, and of amusement ; and gradually, though there was still a serious meaning left in them, they began to sparkle with an irrepressible wish to tease.

'I'm afraid, Mr. Carew,' she said, 'your friends would be a great deal too smart for

me. You know that is a point on which we agree to differ. I don't like smart people, whether they are Whigs or Tories. I'm never at home or at my ease with them. I like the other people far better.'

Her words produced the exact effect she intended, and Carew's voice when he answered her had a trace in it of annoyed incredulity. 'I know,' he said, 'who you mean by *the other people*. You don't mean people who are something besides smart: you mean people who are something opposed to smart. You mean lions and celebrities who are nothing but lions and celebrities, who have odd hair and vague wives and daughters, and who not only are cleverer than average people of fashion, but express their cleverness in a different social language. Now these people, if you wish to consult them on their own special subjects, are no doubt most interesting to meet, and it may be curious to watch their

characteristics. But you surely—come, Mrs. Harley, be honest—you surely don't prefer them as friends, as daily companions?'

'Yes,' said Mrs. Harley, 'I do. I prefer them as friends, and as daily companions.'

'I,' Carew retorted, 'agree with De Tocqueville, and I think it the profoundest saying in his whole book on Democracy, that a man, if necessary, can learn to put up with anything except with the manners of some other class than his own. Of course I prefer just as you do a clever man to a fool; but certainly, in a friend, the first thing I should look to would be, not that he should be fond of the same books that I am, but that he should look at society with the same inherited prejudices. However, happily, one can find friends who do both. There are surely plenty of people who are clever and smart as well.'

'Yes, clever, no doubt,' said Mrs. Harley.

‘ But to what use do they put their cleverness? What do they talk about? What do they think about? By what standard do they measure themselves and you? *They* are the smart set ; that is their great notion ; and if you don’t belong to that, they think you are nothing and nowhere. And as for manners—well, I can tell you this : I have seen worse manners amongst these same smart people than I have ever seen elsewhere in any class of society.’

‘ Stop,’ interposed Carew. ‘ We are talking of different things. You have run away with the word *smart*, which I merely used as a piece of convenient slang. You are talking about one small clique, the *personnel* of which is changing every season. You are talking about a clique ; I am talking about a class, or, if you like it better, a caste. That particular clique may be as little in my line as in yours ; but surely in the class of which it is

proud to form a part—and of which, by the way, some of its members do not form a part—you will find as much culture and intellect as you will find anywhere else, with social qualities in addition which you will find nowhere else.’

‘ I don’t deny for a moment,’ said Mrs. Harley, ‘ that there’s a sort of glamour about it all. There *is*. And besides, it is what oneself one was born amongst and bred up to. Even the people I was abusing just now—the clique as you call it—and it *is* a clique—through all their bad manners you can see that they are ladies and gentlemen.’

‘ Exactly,’ said Carew ; ‘ they possess the very thing which your *other people* are, in spite of their talents, distinguished by not possessing. The difference need not always be grotesque or glaring ; but, in so far as it exists, you surely must feel it a barrier between yourself and them. It is not merely a ques-



tion of how to come into a room. It is a question of the whole perspective of life.'

'Yes,' said Mrs. Harley, 'and the people I call *my* friends are the people, I think, who see life most truly. I like them because they embody the real meaning, the real life of the time—its thought, its science, its art, its politics, even its dreams and its impossible aspirations.'

Carew paused for a moment, and then said abruptly, 'Well, what do you say of our old Catholic families, and the circle within a circle formed by them? Is no meaning embodied there, or, if you like to call it so, no impossible dream? As to politics, you are partly right about that, more's the pity: it's your *other people*, no doubt, who make the Radical thunderstorm. And yet, on second thoughts, if you stick to polite society, you can see the sheet lightning in the faces of Whigs like Stonehouse. Anyhow, Mrs.



Harley, you must admit this : that, given what you require in the way of aspiration and intellect, this is seen to its best advantage, and is most congenial to yourself, when you find it in the world to which you yourself belong.'

'No,' said Mrs. Harley; 'speaking honestly, I do *not* think so. I think that the polish and charm which characterize the world you speak of, and which I feel just as fully as you do ; I think that the unexpressed sympathy which exists between its members, and which forms so subtle and pleasant a link between them—I think that all this implies and is founded upon a set of beliefs and assumptions with regard to an aristocracy which, even if true once, are certainly true no longer. Once, no doubt, aristocracies did lead. Of whatever life there was in the world they were the centre. But things are changed. The centre is shifted now. Not only does the life of the

world no longer centre in them ; it is not even what it was till very lately, a tune that is played under their windows. My dear Mr. Carew, there is no use in disguising the fact. Aristocracy as a genuine power, as a visible fact in the world, may not yet be buried, perhaps ; but it is dead.'

'Then, in that case,' said Carew, 'let me die with it. I am only thirty-five, but I have outlived my time, and few and evil have been the days of my pilgrimage. There are other things,' he added presently—'there are other things in my mind besides London drawing-rooms—the winter sunsets beyond the park ; the noise of rooks in the elm-trees over the graves of those who are nearest to me ; old servants ; the tower of the village church ; and the welcome once ready for me in every cottage in the village.'

He spoke with so much feeling that Mrs. Harley was anxious not to jar upon it.

‘ In one thing at least,’ she said, ‘ I think you are right. Amongst the old Catholic families of England, and amongst the converts who have been absorbed into them, there is an ideal, there is an aspiration to live for ; and I respect those who live for it, though with it itself I have no sympathy whatsoever. And yet,’ she went on reflectively, ‘ even as Catholics their position narrows their views. I have seen it, I have felt it, I have known and stayed with so many of them. There are my cousins the Burtons—a typical case if there is one. You know how those girls—no longer girls now, poor things!—were brought up. You know what Burton was in the old Lord’s time. I often think of poor Charley, with the three Italian priests who were his tutors ; the retainers, born on the property—you could hardly call them servants—that the whole place was swarming with ; the endless horses in the stables ; the constant coming

and going ; the meets, the scarlet coats, and the foreign ecclesiastics—any number of them—gliding quietly up and down the huge passages. It was one of the last of the really great households in England. Well, and what has been the result in this generation on those who were brought up in it and amongst the ideas embodied in it ? As for Charley, well, we won't say much of him ; but his sisters—they are really noble, high-minded women, full of intelligence, and anxious to do their work in the world ; but of the world they are so anxious to work in they know about as much as Don Quixote. They have just the same mixture in them that their parents had, of the intensest pride and the intensest humility. Each of these feelings is equally antiquated and equally genuine. They support each other like two cards in a card-house, and are about as fit as a card-house is to endure the weather of the century.'

‘About the elder ones,’ said Carew, ‘that may be quite true. I do not know them well. But you can’t say the same about their half-sister, Miss Consuelo.’

‘No,’ said Mrs. Harley, with a sudden access of animation. ‘In her, I admit, you come to a totally different thing. She is like the others in some ways, certainly. She has all those prejudices for which you feel so much sympathy ; but there is a passion, an energy, in her nature which cannot be satisfied with worn-out ways of showing themselves. She doesn’t hear much of any new ideas, it is true ; but what she does hear of she drinks in, as a traveller in the desert would drink in drops of water. There is a hunger in her eyes, you can hardly tell for what—whether for a man to love or for some great duty to do—perhaps for both. I often think that, could she only find the conditions of life that would suit her—could she only find a husband who

could really understand and help her—she would be the most interesting and the most remarkable woman I know. Have you seen her?’

‘Seen her?’ said Carew, half absently. ‘Why, I know her!’

‘I mean, have you seen her since she has been out here?’

‘Out here? Out where? I don’t quite understand you.’

‘Did not you know,’ said Mrs. Harley, ‘they have been here for the last fortnight—she and two of her sisters. They are in the hotel next to ours. Lord Stonehouse is there also, and takes excellent care of them. I must say, whatever his faults may be, he’s most kind to his own relations.’

Carew, for a moment, looked as if he were going to speak. There was a light in his eye, a moment’s surprise and start; but his words died on his lips, and, leaning back

in his seat, he stared absently at the view, as if he considered the conversation ended. Silence is nowhere so catching as in a carriage, and his two companions became silent also. Meanwhile, the road had begun descending. It no longer skirted the bare heights of the mountains, but was sweeping downwards in a series of curves and slopes. Above and under it were frequent masses of foliage. On either side of it, alternately, as it turned and circled, expanding inland landscapes showed themselves to the eyes of the travellers, glimmering far under the rapidly brightening moon; and at last, like a large irregular crescent of stars, the lights of some large town were seen clustering along the sea, below them.

At this sight Carew suddenly roused himself, and said abruptly: 'I shall sleep at Nice to-night. I told my servants I should very possibly do so.'

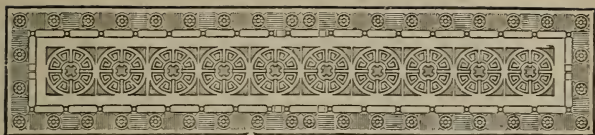


Mrs. Harley gave a faintly perceptible smile. ‘Of course,’ she said, ‘you are going to dine with us? We were counting on that in any case. If you like it, I will send over and ask the Burtons to meet you.’

Carew murmured an answer of acquiescence. Then again there was silence; and hardly a word further was spoken till the wall of a villa garden made a white glare along the road-side, in the light of a gas-lamp opposite, and they saw they were approaching the town, and that their day’s expedition was ended.







### CHAPTER III.



THE sense of the town roused them. In another moment they passed a suburban tramcar. The world they had just left, of forests, of laden mules, and of mouldering mountain strongholds, lay like a dream behind them. They were once again in the glare and rattle of to-day.

‘Mrs. Harley,’ said Carew, waking up into matter-of-fact alertness, ‘you must really consider when you will let me expect you. Think over your plans this evening, and you shall tell me to-morrow before I go back to the château.’

‘ We have nothing to do next week, that I know of,’ said Harley, turning to his wife ; ‘ and if Mr. Carew would really like to have us then—— To be sure, I forgot one thing. There is that poor invalid, to whom we promised to show the country.’

‘ Hush !’ said Mrs. Harley. ‘ Not another word about him. Mr. Carew would never speak again to us if he knew who this poor invalid was.’

Had the invalid been a woman, it is possible that Carew might have been curious. As it was merely a man he let the allusion pass. ‘ Perhaps,’ he said with a slight accent of consciousness, ‘ I might get the Burtons to join our party also.’

Mrs. Harley shook her head. ‘ I’m afraid not,’ she said. ‘ What do you think, George? Elfrida and Mildred have still their little doubts about Mr. Carew.’

‘ You mean,’ said Carew, not wholly with-

out embarrassment, 'you mean that I am not a Catholic?'

'Yes, that,' said Mrs. Harley, 'and one or two other little things besides.'

'What?' said Carew. 'Do you mean that ridiculous story which so frightened my Uncle Horace, and which our good friend Stonehouse was kind enough to set him right about?'

'Well, yes,' said Mrs. Harley. 'More or less I mean that. I don't say that Elfrida and Mildred still think you were in love with the lady, but they certainly once did entertain the suspicion: and, poor dear souls, good and amiable as they are, although the suspicion is quite cleared away, it has left a little sediment in their minds of *naïve* unworldly shyness. They are frightened of you, not because you justified the suspicion, but because you suggested it.'

'The real fact is,' said her husband, laugh-

ing, ' they think him so good they can't forgive him for not being better ; and to them he seems far more immoral, because they compare him with what they wish him to be, than numbers of men far worse, on whom they waste no wishes whatever. But I don't see,' he added, half seriously, ' why, if you were to take charge of her, they shouldn't allow Miss Consuelo to come without them. She, I am sure, would only be too delighted.'

' That,' said Mrs. Harley, ' would be luck indeed for her. Doesn't Consuelo wish she may get it, poor child ! Besides, my dear George, we two are in rather bad odour with Elfrida and Mildred ourselves. They will never, I think, get over the shock of having seen that poor man in our rooms. By the way, Mr. Carew, as I warned you just now, had you been there you would have been horrified just as they were.'

' Who on earth,' said Carew, ' can this

mysterious person be? Is it the invalid you spoke of? Is your invalid so very alarming?’

‘Tell me, George,’ said Mrs. Harley, ‘shall we confess it to him? He is sure to find it out for himself, and after all he will perhaps forgive us. Mr. Carew, our invalid is Mr. Foreman.’

‘Foreman!’ exclaimed Carew, with a genuine start of aversion. ‘Do you mean Foreman the agitator? Do you mean the Socialist? Do you mean that lying egotistical scoundrel, half dunce and half madman, who is going about London haranguing the unemployed workmen—poor creatures, whom hunger has made at once savage and credulous—and trying to rouse in them every contemptible quality that can unfit them for any human society—the passions of wild beasts and the hopes of gaping children? Is that really the man you mean?’

‘Poor Foreman!’ said Harley, with a smile

of benign indifference, 'I think society is safe enough as long as we have only him to attack it.'

'I don't know,' Mrs. Harley retorted. 'In times of distress like these, especially on the eve of a general election, a man like that can do an endless amount of mischief. You know, George, don't you, that in a number of constituencies he and his friends are going to run Socialist candidates?'

'And yet,' exclaimed Carew, 'you are a friend of this creature—you countenance him? Good God! I can't understand it! I would as soon be friends with a forger. Besides, what has he, who says that all riches are robbery—what has he to do with a leisurely winter on the Riviera, especially at Nice, that playground of the idle and the profligate?'

'Poor Foreman,' said Mrs. Harley, 'is no doubt mistaken, terribly mistaken, in a great number of ways. But he is entirely unselfish, entirely honest in his opinions——'

‘Begging your pardon,’ interposed Carew, ‘that is just what I say he is not. He may be fool enough to be honest in his Socialistic theories ; but he cannot be honest in the way he denounces classes, who are no more to blame for having been born rich than he is to blame for having been born a biped.’

‘I can tell you,’ said Mrs. Harley, ‘he has done one thing, in which we might all of us take a lesson from him. He has made himself familiar with the actual face of poverty. Day by day he has sought out and examined the squalor, the destitution, the hopelessness that exist at our very doors almost. No wonder, when his mind is so full of the thoughts of misery, that he feels indignant at us and at all our luxury. I confess I sympathize with him. Often and often after he has been talking to me, I have felt that every superfluous morsel I ate would choke me. I know he is a visionary about the methods of curing the evil ; but he is certainly



no visionary about the evil that wants curing, or about the sullen and restless sense of it that is spreading amongst its victims. Yes, Mr. Carew, you may talk as much as you like about aristocracies, but the great question of the future is the condition of the labouring multitude.'

'And so,' said Carew, 'Mr. Foreman is one of your *other people*, is he?—one of the people who embody the real life of the time?'

'Yes,' said Mrs. Harley, again relapsing into a smile. 'Mr. Foreman is one of my *other people*. You asked just now what he could be doing at Nice. He is here by his doctor's orders. He is broken with over-work. His chest is affected; he is suffering from the results of a chill, which he caught when addressing a meeting of dock-labourers. However, Mr. Carew, we won't inflict him at dinner on you. If I can manage it, you shall have your aristocratic Burtons instead. By



the way, it occurs to me now, from something you said this morning, that the hotel where you left your portmanteau, and where I conclude you intend to sleep, is the very hotel where the Burtons themselves are. Here,' she continued, for the carriage was now stopping, 'here is ours, so you are only a few yards off; and if you don't mind waiting whilst I write it, I will give you a note for Elfrida, to ask them to come this evening. I shall tell them eight. It is now a little past seven.'

The note in question was soon in Carew's hand, and he turned towards his own hotel with a pleasant feeling of expectation. When he pushed open the heavy plate-glass doors, the large hall was alive with groups of loiterers; most of them, so it seemed, fresh from the *table d'hôte*, and about to separate in quest of their various dissipations. Taken as a whole, it was not an attractive company. The men looked, to use Cardinal Newman's

phrase, like 'bad imitations of polished ungodliness,' whilst the ladies suggested the class which polished ungodliness imitates. What, then, was Carew's surprise when, amongst a medley of toilettes unmistakably fresh from Paris, he at once caught sight of two singularly plain black dresses, and was aware in an instant that the eldest Miss Burtons were before him! Surprise, however, was not his only emotion. He became conscious of a sudden sense of embarrassment, the causes of which he had not then time to analyze. He felt it impossible to go up to them and give them Mrs. Harley's note in person; and slipping into the bureau, in order to avoid their notice, he determined to wait until they should go upstairs, intending as soon as they did so to send it up to them by a waiter.

Unseen himself, he had now an excellent view of them: they were, indeed, but a few yards away from him, and he could also see

something of what kept them in a scene so incongruous. A middle-aged man, with his back to Carew, was apparently holding them in conversation; but the chilly smile with which they both heard and answered him, and the constant way in which their glances wandered, showed plainly enough that they were waiting for someone else, and that in attending to him at all they were simply the victims of their civility. Carew had no intention of playing the eavesdropper; but the gentleman had a trick of occasionally raising his voice, and as he did so, reducing the pace of his syllables, which forced what he then said on the ears of every one in his neighbourhood. Nearly every time that this occurred, Carew caught the name of some person of high distinction; and had he been half asleep in an arm-chair, his impression would have been that somebody was reciting a page out of the 'Peerage.' 'Lady Something did this,'

and 'Lord Something did that,' formed apparently the jewels of the speaker's conversation, to which all the rest of it was nothing more than the setting. The Miss Burtons listened with a kind of patient apathy, and seemed to be giving him as little encouragement to continue as one human being could possibly give another; when a statement he made about a certain well-known duchess at last roused the elder of them into a moment's passing animation.

'What a charming woman that is!' he said. 'I travelled down with her from Paris only a fortnight since.'

'Really!' exclaimed Miss Burton. 'How odd that we didn't see you; for we were with her ourselves, and we shared a *coupé* between us.'

'Well,' he said, somewhat taken aback, 'I couldn't exactly get a seat in the same train; but I came by the very next one, and I took

charge of her white dog for her. I preferred to wait and get a whole *coupé salon* to myself. But here,' he added, as if glad to change the subject, 'here is your servant looking for you. Ah! he sees you now, I think. *Ici*, man—*Venez*—this way—*ici*.'

The servant approached, and Carew could plainly hear him as he spoke.

'Miss Consuelo, ma'am,' he said, 'is with her maid, in Galignani's Library, and she orders me to say that she will be in, in another five minutes.'

'Then send Louise to me,' said Miss Burton, 'and we will dine in half an hour. And, Eugène, go to the office and ask if there are any letters or parcels.'

Both she and her sister immediately turned towards the staircase, and with a slight bow, as they did so, to the Duchess's late companion, left him staring after them in an attitude of despondent meditation.

An irrepressible smile, meanwhile, had been growing on Carew's lips, for it had dawned on him some moments ago who this fine gentleman was. 'Of course,' he murmured, 'it is Inigo. It can surely be no one else;' and if the smallest doubt had still remained as to the matter it was presently set at rest by Mr. Inigo himself, who strolled into the bureau with an air of solemn abstraction; and finding the clerk absent, and not seeing Carew, instinctively betook himself to the book in which the names of visitors were recorded.

Mr. Inigo was a man who, by long and laborious effort, had lately arrived, in the social world of London, at just enough celebrity for his presence to excite a smile. His origin, thanks to his own diplomatic adroitness, was veiled in profound obscurity. He was content to regard himself, and he hoped he was regarded by others, as having entered

the life of fashion by a kind of spontaneous generation.

‘I must say,’ he muttered aloud to himself, as he stooped down to pore over the book he had opened—‘I must say these two ladies have not much manners. And yet, I should like to know, what right have they to be rude? They were not at one—I know it for a fact—not at one of the really smart balls last season. I mean the very, very smart ones.’ A moment later he closed the page contemptuously. ‘Pooh!’ he exclaimed, ‘there’s nobody that’s much good there!’ and was turning to walk away when the clerk returned, and with him the Burtons’ servant, who was inquiring after his mistress’s letters. ‘Here is one,’ said Carew. ‘Will you be kind enough to deliver it at once. It is from Mrs. Harley, and wants an immediate answer.’ The moment he spoke he felt that Mr. Inigo’s eyes were fixed on him; and when he had



finished some directions to the clerk about a bedroom, Mr. Inigo still was there, in readiness to claim his acquaintance. Carew recognized that there was no chance of escape ; so he submitted to a meeting which he would have gone many yards to avoid.

‘I’d no notion,’ said Mr. Inigo, ‘that you were in these parts. You’ll not stay long—I can venture to predict that.’

‘On the contrary,’ said Carew, ‘I mean to remain till Easter.’

‘Oh,’ said Mr. Inigo, ‘there’s nobody here this winter one ever heard of before ; in fact, till the Darlington came I had hardly a soul to speak to. Lady Darlington, Stonehouse, I, and a few more of us make up a party now and then to the Opera or to Monte Carlo ; but as for me,’ said Mr. Inigo, looking round, in the vain hope of an audience, ‘the sole reason why I’m here is that the poor Grand Duke is expected back



from Mentone ; and when his cough is bad, I amuse him with my stories in the evening. But, by the way, tell me. A moment ago you mentioned Mrs. Harley. Is she *our* Mrs. Harley—the Mrs. Harley we all know? And is she in Nice now?’

‘She is,’ said Carew drily, ‘and as I am going to dine with her, I fear I must leave you and go upstairs to prepare myself.’

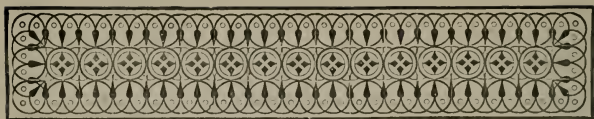
‘Dear me,’ said Mr. Inigo, ‘I must go and call to-morrow. I shall——’ and he wagged his head knowingly, ‘I shall get into dreadful hot water if I don’t pay my respects to her. Perhaps,’ he continued, as Carew was moving off, ‘perhaps, if I came, I should find her at home this evening?’

‘Certainly,’ said Carew, looking back, ‘she will be in her own rooms ; but her servants will tell you better than I can if she intends to receive company.’

Whilst he spoke he had his foot on the

first step of the staircase ; and just as he turned to mount, he became aware that a female figure had passed him. It had moved, it had almost darted, with a noiseless graceful rapidity, something like the flight of a bird, and had nearly, by this time, arrived at the first landing. But Carew's eyes and mind comprehended the whole vision in an instant. A knot of hair arranged with exquisite neatness ; a hand in a grey glove for a moment laid on the banister ; a jacket whose fit any of the ladies in the hall might have envied ; but with all this a proud refinement and dignity which seemed to pervade their possessor, and to linger in her wake like a perfume. A second more, and she was on the landing. Carew was not far behind her ; her eye, as she turned, inevitably encountered his ; and he saw what he had felt, but what he had not distinctly expressed to himself—that it was Miss Consuelo Burton.

It was more than a year since they had met last; and when they had parted, it had been with some circumstances of embarrassment. The girl's face and movements betrayed that she was conscious of this. At the first moment of recognition she stopped short suddenly; a deep colour flushed up into her cheek, and her dark eyes seemed to expand as they fixed on him; but he had hardly uttered the most commonplace words of greeting, and she replied to them in a manner equally commonplace, when her cheek grew pale again, she smiled quickly and nervously, and saying, in a constrained voice, 'I am in a hurry—my sisters are waiting for me,' with another of her bird-like darts, she was gone before he had time to recover himself.



## CHAPTER IV.



CAREW, as he was dressing, restlessly paced his bedroom, agitated and plunged in reflection. Some eighteen months ago, during part of one London season, he had been by her side at nearly every party ; and whatever might have been his own hopes or intentions, he had taught her eyes to brighten the moment she saw him approaching her. Her sisters, with whom vigilance took the place of acuteness, quickly detected this ; and, for a week or two they were not displeased at it. They knew that Carew belonged to one of the oldest families in the

kingdom ; they understood that he was the heir to sufficient, if moderate, property ; and they hoped, from the gossip of many of their own circle, that he would be shortly received into the bosom of the Catholic Church. Gossip, however, and their own observations as directed by it, soon added other and very different details about him. There was nothing definitely scandalous in anything they either heard or saw ; but there was much by which, to their minds, scandal was vaguely suggested. They were warned that he was well known for his levity in his conduct to women ; and though by no means willing to believe these warnings justified, they soon saw enough to convince them, as regarded their sister, that she was but one amongst many objects of his similar and habitual attentions.

Finally something happened that was even more serious. During the past year a certain Comtesse de Saint Valery, divorced, it was

said, from her husband, who was supposed vaguely to be in St. Petersburg, had been glittering before the eyes of the fashionable world, in that social penumbra by which the fashionable world is surrounded. She was a woman of much education and many accomplishments. She had eyes like a Magdalen and a voice like a sorrowing angel. Numbers of eminent men, it was rumoured, had been in love with her ; and she had saved a child from drowning in the waters of the Lago Maggiore. That incident, which was certainly no mere rumour, had made her acquainted with Carew, who was staying in his cousin's villa at the time. He had indeed himself been present at the scene of the accident, having just arrived in time to render some help with a boat, and when she appeared in London some months afterwards, he renewed his acquaintance with her—his acquaintance, or rather his friendship. So marked, indeed,

did this friendship seem to the small circle which had opportunities of observing it, that a muffled report reached the ears of one of his uncles that he was actually intending to marry this fair foreign adventuress. A family scene ensued, which involved certain unpleasantness ; and the consequences to Carew might have been really serious if Lord Stonehouse had not, by means of a certain accident, been able to set the mind of the uncle in question at rest. What happened was this. A first cousin of Lord Stonehouse's, and a second cousin of the Burtons'—a man well-known in the laxer sets of society—dismayed his relations and excited his friends by eloping with the lady, and carrying her off to the Continent. Till this event, the Miss Burtons had hardly heard of her ; still less did they know that she had any acquaintance with Carew. Nor was this surprising. She had, indeed, collected round her a little private clique of



her own ; she had been constantly attended by a number of well-known men, and caressed by a few ladies who were known but no longer countenanced ; she had been the observed of all observers in the Park, at Sandown, and at Hurlingham ; but she had never once appeared at any recognized ball or party. It was at Hurlingham, indeed, that she and her lover had been dining, with a number of friends, the very night before their elopement ; and of these friends it chanced that Carew was one. He seemed—so rumour was exceedingly careful to add—by no means indifferent to the fair delinquent himself ; and the rest of those present were precisely the kind of people who would pardon her delinquency, even if they did not actually emulate it. It was then that the Miss Burtons heard for the first time Carew's name spoken of in this connection ; and they now heard it so spoken of frequently. This brought their



changed opinion of him to a crisis. They were fair enough to recognize that he had not been convicted of anything definitely—not even of trifling with the feelings of their sister; but they felt that he certainly could not be, what they had at first thought him, a very good man; and as he consorted with bad men, he might possibly be even a very bad man. Anyhow, as to their sister they came to this conclusion, that from her acquaintance with him she was running a double risk; that if he were trifling with her she might have a broken heart, or a husband with a doubtful character and an unavowed religion, if he were serious.

Carew, meanwhile, was perfectly unaware of the way in which his merits were being sifted. It is true that he gradually became conscious that he saw less of Miss Consuelo than formerly, and that her sisters' manner had something stiff and cold in it; but what

the change meant, or that it was really more than his fancy, was not brought home to him till a single incident revealed it. At a brilliant evening party which enlivened the decline of the season he had looked for the Burtons everywhere, but had been unable to find them. At last, when the whole world was going, he came upon them downstairs in a corridor, evidently waiting for their carriage. He offered to call it ; but Miss Burton told him drily that someone else had done so. The someone else—a grey-haired gentleman—reappeared at the same instant, urging them to hurry themselves if they would not lose their opportunity. Still unaware that he had suffered any repulse, Carew offered his arm to Miss Consuelo. She took it ; but presently, when her sisters were a few paces in front of her, looking him straight in the face, and speaking low and rapidly, ‘ My relations,’ she said, ‘ don’t wish me to know you ; and so—

for the present—if we meet again, I must ask you not to come up to me or to talk to me.’ Then relinquishing his arm, she hastily held her hand out to him, and saying ‘Good-bye!’ in a voice that had a little quiver in it, in another second she was again close to her sisters.

Carew was so super-sensitive as to his own shortcomings, and, despite his genealogical pride, thought so meanly of his marriageable qualifications, that it was his first impulse to think that he really deserved this treatment; and he walked home that night with the feelings of a dreaming criminal, conscious of his guilt, and yet unable to recollect the nature of it.

Gradually reflection brought him to a juster condition of mind. He believed himself repulsed because he was misunderstood; and he knew the elder Misses Burton quite well enough to realize that, in their eyes, appear-

ances might easily be against him. But still the uncertainty rankled in his heart ; and a sense of desolation he was not in the least prepared for filled his heart at this sudden and unexplained separation. He felt that for him Miss Consuelo Burton was dead ; and he longed that she would come back to him but for one moment from the grave, to tell him distinctly what had taken her away from him. He might have written and asked her without her sisters' suspecting it ; sometimes he thought of doing so : but the thought, whenever it rose, was instantly checked by a feeling as strong and as strange as the sense of desolation itself. He felt that he would sooner lose her acquaintance for ever than keep it by tempting her to a single clandestine action.

He was not long, however, a passive prey to dejection. By-and-by, as the weeks went on, old cares of a more impersonal nature, which, for some time past, he had forgotten,

and had ceased to trouble him, came back again, like returning bailiffs, and again took possession of the chief rooms of his mind. The effect on his thoughts about Miss Consuelo Burton was this. Though not obliterated they were gradually pushed aside ; and in their retirement they quietly and gradually changed themselves. First, though still regretting her, he grew resigned to her loss ; and he ceased to speculate on the chances of any renewal of their intercourse. Then, the facts involved seemed slowly to change their proportions. Whatever the reasons might be which had prejudiced her guardians against him, they probably, after all, might not be so very serious ; and finally an impression grew upon him, though it was not untroubled with diffidence, that should he and the Burtons be ever again thrown together, he would find himself sufficiently whitewashed in the eyes of his late censors, perhaps by their better

judgment, perhaps even by their forgetfulness.

The strength of this impression had been now just put to the test; and the sense of shyness which he had been unable to conceal from himself at once convinced him that it was not quite so strong as he had thought it was. One thing, however, he found was stronger, and that was the attraction which Miss Consuelo Burton had for him. He had come to wonder at times whether the place she held in his heart were not less due to herself than to his own regretful imagination; and he was startled to realize, in their late momentary meeting, not only that her charm was an actual and undeniable fact, but that it was—as far as he could judge—even greater now than formerly.

Pondering these matters as he went through the process of dressing, he became aware that, without having thought why, he

was doing his best to make himself as late as possible. His watch told him that it was nearly dinner-time ; but he was still lingering over his shirt studs and his neck-tie. Why was he doing so? He at last put the question to himself ; and his heart at once made him a very complete confession. He distrusted his position with the elder Miss Burtons, regarded merely in the light of common acquaintances ; but his main reason for avoiding them had been the far more practical fear that they might suspect he would be dining with Mrs. Harley, and might decline her invitation in consequence. As it was, he never doubted that they would accept it ; and he was anxious, he discovered, that they should precede him by some minutes, in order that when he arrived he should find them prepared to meet him. He felt sure that at first the elder ones would feel some displeasure at the prospect ; he felt sure, also, that Mrs. Harley would



notice this. He counted, then, on having his character rapidly canvassed ; on Mrs. Harley putting it in the most favourable and friendly light ; on the elder Miss Burtons feeling that perhaps they had judged him wrongly ; and on entering the room himself, if not restored to their favour, at least with a chance of winning his way back to it.

These reflections very likely evinced no very great subtlety ; but they were better than subtle, for they happened to be substantially true. The Miss Burtons arrived at Mrs. Harley's before Carew. The news that he was coming embarrassed the younger, and caused a shock of surprised annoyance to the elder.

‘ We used to meet,’ said Miss Elfrida drily, ‘ but we have seen nothing at all of him now for a very long time.’

‘ Last season,’ said Mrs. Harley, ‘ he was hardly ever in London.’



‘ Really,’ said Miss Elfrida, ‘ I have not followed his movements. But I’m surprised that so gay a gentleman could tear himself away from his dissipations.’

‘ He stayed in the country,’ said Mrs. Harley, ‘ for his mother’s sake, who is an old lady. There was nothing to be alarmed at in her condition, except the natural weakness of age ; but he fancied he detected a wish in her that he should not leave her that summer, and, however he might like his dissipations, he did, you see, tear himself away from them.’

‘ Really,’ said Miss Burton, in a tone that was somewhat softened, ‘ I should never have thought that of him.’ And she looked down gently, as if lost in reflection. Her host, however, would not leave her in silence.

‘ I always thought,’ she said, ‘ that there was nothing, in your opinion, too good for Mr. Carew to have done—Mr. Carew, who is

so great a friend of your Cardinal's. Surely you must admire the man who, though merely a wretched heretic, is yet asked by the Cardinal to breakfast three times in a fortnight.'

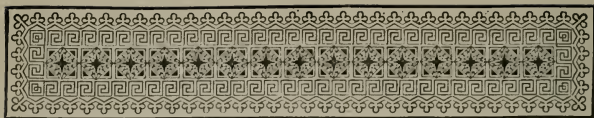
Miss Burton's look and manner grew, for an instant, cold again.

'I'm afraid,' she said, '*that* acquaintance is a thing of the past now. There are other friends Mr. Carew has found more congenial.'

'Well,' interposed Mrs. Harley, 'we shall see what he finds *us* ; for, my dear Elfrida, he is outside the door this moment.'

Had she said 'inside,' she would, perhaps, have been more accurate, for the servant had announced him almost before she had done speaking. On first entering, it was evident that he was somewhat shy. This, however, did him no disservice. For, as in his boldness there was nothing impertinent, so in his shyness there was something graceful and dignified. The reserved courtesy with which he

greeted the elder Miss Burtons, and which, though reserved, was perfectly unresentful, pleaded at once for him with their generous and delicate instincts ; nor was the impression altered when they saw at a single glance the slightly different manner in which he approached their sister. In his short greeting nothing of his demeanour was lost on them ; and they realized, by a process more rapid than conscious reasoning, that if he met *them* with reserve he was meeting *her* with reverence. Carew himself, by a somewhat similar process, realized, for his part, what was passing in their minds about him ; and though he did not flatter himself that he was not still looked askance at, he felt as if at least he were to be granted a new trial.



## CHAPTER V.



HE found at dinner that every circumstance favoured him. The elder Miss Burtons, however they might differ from him on some points, agreed with him at least on one—his attachment to anything which suggested the præ-popular epoch ; and when Mrs. Harley began about the old town amongst the mountains, their usual cheerful gravity was at once roused to interest. Their faces brightened, and they asked enthusiastic questions. Carew, at first, was content to say very little ; and he merely answered Mrs. Harley about some facts as to which she ap-

pealed to him. Presently, however, seeing that he was treated as an authority, the Miss Burtons began to look at him when he spoke, and both by their words and eyes to put their questions to him for themselves. As for their sister, her feelings were less evident. She hardly opened her lips ; she listened to Carew with intentness, and whenever his face was averted her eyes were gravely fixed on him. But the interest he excited in her seemed to be hardly due so much to what he said, as to the fact that he was saying it.

From the old town the conversation, by easy steps, wandered away to other antiquities of the neighbourhood, to similar towns, to old villas and châteaux, and at last to the château which Carew was himself inhabiting. This at once seemed to captivate the eldest Miss Burton's imagination, and now for the first time Carew and she found themselves beginning a direct conversation with each other.

‘It’s a place,’ said Carew, ‘as I was telling Mrs. Harley, where one fancies, except for a distant glimpse of the railway, that one is actually living before the French Revolution. Do you know the feeling, after having been long separated from someone, and having almost come to think you would never see them again, of once again feeling yourself all alone with them—securely and in peace, face to face, and heart to heart? I have just the same feeling when living at Courbon-Loubet. Imagine the delight, as you look on the wide landscape, of knowing that you are in an Eden where there are no political meetings, and where a creature like Mr. Snapper is as unknown as a zebra!’

Mr. Japhet Snapper was an opulent member of Parliament, who at that time was pushing himself fast into notice, and struggling to be recognized as a leader of the Radical party. The moment his name was mentioned a rapid

look of disgust passed over the faces of both the elder Miss Burtons. It seemed to affect them as if it were some disagreeable smell.

‘That man!’ exclaimed Miss Mildred.  
‘One can hardly bear to think of him.’

Mrs. Harley, however, was by no means of this opinion. ‘I’m afraid,’ she said, laughing, ‘that you and I and all of us shall be obliged to think of him soon. Mr. Snapper, Mildred, is the future Prime Minister of England.’

‘Never!’ said Miss Elfrida, with a quiet but contemptuous gravity. ‘We have sunk low enough, but we have hardly come yet to that. Fancy a man who, in public, lives by denouncing gentlemen, and in private does nothing but vainly struggle to imitate them!’

‘Yes,’ added Miss Mildred, ‘and all he succeeds in doing is to make himself look like a “swell” outside one of Charley’s comic songs. Really, Evelyn, I wonder how you can bring yourself to know such people.’



‘I,’ said Mrs. Harley, with her eyes gleaming mischievously, ‘find Mr. Snapper charming. So would you, Elfrida, if you would only consent to meet him. What fun it would be to see him taking you down to dinner! George, next season we *must* manage that, mustn’t we?’

‘I think,’ interposed Miss Mildred, ‘that we know him better than you do. Part of Consuelo’s little property is in the town where he makes his money ; so we have had some opportunity of looking behind the scenes and learning the way in which he behaves to those dependent on him. I can only say that to me it is incomprehensible how a man who is as brutal to them as he is in private can have the face to pretend in public that he is their friend and champion.’

‘Of course,’ said Miss Elfrida, ‘the man is not a gentleman.’

‘You speak,’ said Mrs. Harley, ‘as if a



man's not being a gentleman explained every sin, and at the same time excused none.'

'So it does,' said Carew, 'with sins of a certain kind. It does so with the sins of selfish schemers in politics. There are certain forms of political dishonesty which are possible only to people of Snapper's kind. A gentleman could not commit them, let him be as scheming and as selfish as you please, because a gentleman lacks the sense by which the temptation to commit them is appreciated. A gentleman may forget the people, or offer them stones for bread. It is only men like Snapper who will attempt to coax them with poison.'

Here, for the first time during dinner, Miss Consuelo looked straight at Carew, and said, a little abruptly, 'What do you mean by poison?'

'I mean,' said Carew, 'the poison of hopes which he knows can never be realized, and of

anger at conditions of life which he knows can never be altered.'

'Come, come,' said Mrs. Harley, 'I really must stick up for my friends. I don't know why you should assume that Mr. Snapper is dishonest. My own belief is that, as regards the poor, he does genuinely feel what he says, and that he is genuinely anxious to remove or to lessen their troubles. For, my dear Elfrida, the poor *have* troubles. Even you and Mr. Carew, I think, must admit that.'

'They have,' said Miss Elfrida; 'no one knows it better than I do. They have many. But if you look at the few which Mr. Snapper chooses to harangue about, you will find that he chooses them for an exceedingly obvious reason—not because they are those most distressing to the poor, but because he can manage most easily to lay them to the charge of the rich.'

'You forget,' said Mrs. Harley, 'he is a

very rich man himself. He has, I can assure you, no objection to riches.'

'I believe you there,' Miss Elfrida retorted. 'I should have said gentlemen, the upper classes, the aristocracy. He hates them far more than he loves the poor. Come, my dear Evelyn, even you can't deny his bitterness.'

'Yes,' said Mrs. Harley, 'he *is* bitter—no doubt he is; and I confess that I don't wonder at it. After all, he is only human; and when one thinks of the way in which he has been treated in London—the snubs he has had from all the fine lords and ladies—the even worse snubs he has had from stuffy old country gentlemen—— My dear Elfrida, if you had seen him, as I have done, biting his lip at dinner, and wincing at the way in which he was—well, treated by some people as if he were one of the footmen——'

'My dear Evelyn,' interposed Miss Mildred, with a little good-natured gurgle, 'and

what does the man want? One human being, he says, is just as good as another. Why should he wish to be treated better than footmen are? No, no; I've positively no patience with him. As you yourself admit, he thinks lords and ladies such wonderful people, that he is mad with wretchedness if they don't civilly notice him; and then, to revenge himself, he goes and shrieks in his speeches that they are so silly and wicked, that they ought to be noticed by nobody. Besides,' she went on, 'in spite of his denunciations of landlords, he has, I am told, been thinking of setting up as a squire himself, and has been looking about for an estate with a fine park belonging to it. I hear from our agent that he has his eye upon several in the West of England—in your part of the world, Mr. Carew.'

'Well,' said Mrs. Harley, drily, 'to return to what we were speaking about, I can only

tell you that when I have asked him for money for charities, I have always found him most ready to give, and generous.'

'Yes,' said Miss Mildred, 'but you only see one side of him. You say yourself he is touchy because great people will take no notice of him, and, of course, he is delighted to curry favour with you. But we have seen him, as it were, when he thought no one was looking. We have seen him in the light, not of what he recommends for the poor, but of what he does for them. He has bought several streets of workmen's houses at Birchester; and I am not speaking at random when I tell you this—that there is more squalor, more overcrowding, more rack-renting on his property than in any other part of the town.'

'I assure you, Evelyn,' said Miss Elfrida, with a more subdued intonation, 'Mildred is quite right in all she says. She is an excel-

lent woman of business, and knows thoroughly well what she is talking about.'

'Will nobody,' Miss Mildred continued—  
'will nobody show him up? Will none of the people themselves lift a voice against him? There would be no need whatever to abuse the man. Nothing would be wanted but simply to state facts. I wonder that this is not done by the *gentlemen* of even his own party.'

'I don't care,' said Miss Elfrida, 'who it is who exposes him—gentleman or no gentleman. Indeed, I have often thought that a man who was not a gentleman could do it better than a man who was. If one of us were to attack him, it might seem that we did so in our own interests. If some one else did it, everyone could see that it was done in the interests of sincerity.'

'My dear Elfrida,' said Mrs. Harley, 'and you too, Mildred, I am in great doubt whether

I shall tell you something, or whether I shall not tell you. I am considering how you would both take it.'

'Tell us,' said both of them, with a smile of almost childish curiosity.

'Well,' said Mrs. Harley, 'if I do, you must not be horrified. Do you remember a certain man—a poor invalided creature—whom you were shocked the other day to meet here, calling upon me?'

'What!' exclaimed Miss Elfrida, 'do you mean that dreadful Mr. Foreman? I can promise you, my dear Evelyn, I shall never get over that. Why, he is ten times worse than Mr. Snapper himself. Mr. Snapper would only pick the landlord's pockets. This man would murder everyone who has a decent coat on his back. Mr. Snapper, too, whatever he believes or disbelieves, never openly insults the Church; but this man is an avowed Atheist, who utters his blasphemies in the



parks and the public streets. He even ridicules marriage, and advocates everything that is horrible. I only speak from what you yourself have told me.'

'And now,' said Mrs. Harley, 'I am going to tell you something more. You were wishing for somebody to denounce and to expose Mr. Snapper. In Mr. Foreman you have the very thing you were wishing for.'

'Mr. Foreman!' exclaimed Miss Elfrida. 'He denounce Mr. Snapper! He is far more likely to egg him on than denounce him. They are both of the same party, only one is more extreme than the other. A Socialist hates the upper classes even more than a Radical does.'

'No,' said Carew, 'I think you are wrong there. What a Socialist hates is the middle classes. No doubt he thinks landlords very bad indeed; but he thinks them good when compared with a Radical manufacturer, and if



he seems to agree with the Radical in so far as he thinks them bad, the two come to this conclusion for exactly opposite reasons. The Radical hates landlords because he thinks they differ from tradesmen ; the Socialist hates them because he thinks they resemble tradesmen.'

' You see, Elfrida,' said Mrs. Harley, ' you and Mr. Foreman will agree on this point to perfection. Come, tell me : are you prepared to meet him ? '

Miss Elfrida and Miss Mildred had, both of them, till now been listening with a patient if somewhat puzzled attention ; but at this last question, put, so it seemed, quite seriously, their faces assumed a look of surprised reproach, and they drew themselves up with the slightest indication of *hauteur*. Mrs. Harley, however, went on placidly with her suggestion.

' If you like it,' she added, ' I will ask him

to come in after dinner. He is staying in the hotel.'

Had Mr. Foreman been the plague or the cholera personified, the two elder Miss Burtons could hardly have started more.

'In this hotel!' they gasped, as soon as they had recovered their voices. 'I hope and trust, Evelyn, you will not ask him to do anything of the kind.'

'I,' said Carew, 'quite agree with the Miss Burtons. I have no wish to meet one scoundrel simply because he exposes another. All the same, I believe Foreman to be far more honest than Mr. Snapper.'

'If,' said Miss Elfrida, having apparently reflected a little, 'he were not so horrid in other things than his politics, I might perhaps bring myself to see him, and to talk to him. We might—who knows?—make him useful, and perhaps put him right in some ways. But a complete unbeliever—a man who insults the

name of Almighty God in public, and who glories in despising every rule of morality——’

Miss Elfrida stopped. Her feelings were too strong for utterance.

‘Of course,’ said Mrs. Harley, ‘that side of him is very shocking ; but you are quite wrong—you think that he has no morals at all. On the contrary, he has a code of the strictest and most difficult kind ; and the first law in it is the law of justice with regard to property, and the material means of living a decent life. Without such justice he thinks every other virtue is a mockery ; and justice with him means not only talk about the poor, but it means exceedingly real and exceedingly rude self-sacrifice for them.’

‘I think,’ said Miss Elfrida, ‘the Church could have taught him this without his taking the trouble to think it out for himself. The Church has taught charity to the poor for some eighteen hundred years : and Mr. Fore-

man's charity ends with their bodies—for you cannot imagine that he has any care for their souls.'

'What Mr. Foreman thinks,' said Mrs. Harley, 'is this.' He thinks that so long as their bodies are treated as they at present are, to work for their souls is a hopeless, is even a ridiculous task. How, he asks, shall they be pure and temperate, how shall they have any of the virtues which good Christians prize, so long as they are housed like pigs and fed worse than pigs—so long as they have no knowledge, and no leisure, and nothing from their childhood that so much as suggests happiness, except drink, and things worse than drink? How shall we tell them to be clean when they have only sewage to wash in?'

'Surely,' said Miss Mildred, 'it is the mission of the Church to bring them water. Its first message is to those in want and

misery ; its chief work lies among them. It enjoins the rich to relieve wretchedness, and it helps the wretched to bear it.'

'Think,' Miss Elfrida added, 'of the monastic orders. In some the work is harder than that of any labourer ; in others the food is coarser and more meagre. In this way they are perpetually teaching the poor that there is nothing necessarily degrading either in constant toil or in privation.'

'Yes,' said Mrs. Harley, 'but the hushed asceticism of the monastery or of the convent is a very different thing from the brutal starvation of the streets. Mr. Foreman's ideal of duty differs from yours in this. You look on poverty as a thing that must be endured or at best palliated ; he looks on it as a thing that must be utterly done away with. Your notion is that the rich ought to help the poor. His notion is that there should be no poor to help. Please don't think that I agree with

him in all his views ; still less do I think him right in the ways he takes to disseminate them. But I want to show you that he is something quite different from what you imagine him—a cross between a libertine and a criminal lunatic. Whatever may be your opinions of Mr. Snapper's zeal for the poor, Mr. Foreman is perfectly genuine. You, George, though you don't think much of him, will at least answer for that.'

'Yes,' said Harley, in a genial tone of amusement, 'he is a genuine zealot; no one can doubt that who knows him; and if you compare him with Snapper, there is something almost grotesque in the contrast. What is genuine in Snapper is his hatred of the aristocracy; what is genuine in Foreman is his feeling for the labouring classes. Foreman only denounces the rich as a means of rousing the poor; Snapper only rouses the poor as a means of attacking a certain section of the rich.'

During all this conversation Miss Consuelo had remained silent; but though silent she had been not inattentive. On the contrary, her attention had been increasing. She looked first at one speaker, then at another, in particular at Mrs. Harley; and seemed several times to have been on the point of asking a question, if the presence of her sisters had not for some reason embarrassed her. At last she began, just as the ladies were rising, 'I have heard the Cardinal speak about Mr. Foreman——'

'My dear Consuelo,' exclaimed Miss Mildred, 'what can the Cardinal have possibly said about Mr. Foreman to you?'

'He was not talking to me—he was talking to someone else; and there was much about Mr. Foreman with which he said he sympathized.'

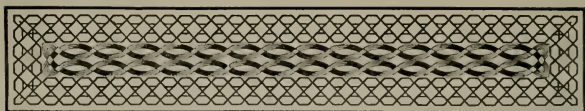
'My dear child,' said Miss Mildred, 'you must have misunderstood the Cardinal.'




‘Indeed,’ said Carew, ‘I venture to think not. The day before I left England, I spent an entire evening with him, and he happened to say the very same thing to me. Of Foreman, personally, he knows nothing, nor of the infamous falsehoods employed by him to further his cause; else I am sure his opinion would be very much modified. He did know, however, that Foreman was a complete atheist; and yet, in spite of that, he distinctly told me of him, that there was much in his social views, and much in his efforts to spread them, with which, as a Catholic, he himself agreed.’

The effect of this speech on the elder Miss Burtons was considerable. It did not, indeed, seem to alter their views about Mr. Foreman; for Miss Elfrida merely remarked quietly, ‘We all know that the Cardinal’s a bit of a Radical.’ But the fact that the Cardinal was still intimate with Carew worked wonders for the latter in restoring

him to their good opinion; and in the way they looked at him, as he held the door open for them, there was a returning gleam of their original frank friendliness. Miss Consuelo, too, as she passed, for a moment raised her eyes to him.



## CHAPTER VI.

HEN the two gentlemen rejoined the rest of their party, the first sound that greeted Carew's ears was his own name being uttered by Mrs. Harley.

‘ Did you hear us,’ she said, ‘ taking your name in vain ? We were not abusing you much, so you need not discompose yourself. We have been talking again about the wonders of Courbon-Loubet ; and I have been telling the Miss Burtons the reasons why you like it. You like it, I was saying, for just the same reasons that the ostrich likes to hide his head in the sand. You lose sight there of the

progress of the sacred democracy, and you think, accordingly, that the democracy has ceased progressing.'

Carew chanced at the moment to be standing close to Miss Consuelo.

'Perhaps,' she said to him, speaking low and quickly, 'you think, also, that the poor have ceased suffering?'

There was a vacant chair beside her, and he sat down on it. Diffident, however, of even seeming to engross her, he hardly did more than glance at her; and with a laugh of forced indifference he addressed himself to the party generally.

'If we were inclined to forget democratic progress,' he said, 'some of us here, before dinner, had an excellent reminder of its reality, in the presence of—come, Mrs. Harley, whom do you think?—a most eminent man, and a very dear friend of yours.'

'Of mine!' said Mrs. Harley. 'Do you

mean Mr.\*\*\*\*\*?' and she named a distinguished statesman. 'He, I know, is expected here.'

'No,' said Carew; 'I mean—I mean—guess once more!—Mr. Inigo.'

The elder Miss Burtons broke into a hearty laugh.

'What?' they exclaimed. 'And have you seen him too?'

'That man!' said Mrs. Harley. 'You don't mean to say that he's here! He is no friend of mine. I have never allowed him to be introduced to me.'

'In that case,' said Carew, 'he must be in a very forlorn condition; for he assured me just now that you were the best friend he possessed.'

'Well,' said Mrs. Harley, 'now I come to think of it, I believe that one night he did see me to my carriage—yes, and ever since he has been constantly leaving cards on me.'

‘ My dear Evelyn,’ said Miss Elfrida, ‘ I can tell you he’s a very grand gentleman. Mildred and I felt quite frumps by comparison.’ And she began a description of their encounter with Mr. Inigo in the hall.

Carew now turned to Miss Consuelo ; and, for the first time addressing himself to her exclusively, ‘ You have never,’ he asked, ‘ met Mr. Foreman, have you ? ’

‘ No,’ she said ; ‘ but I am not like you, and I think I should like to do so. I often feel about the poor—often, perhaps always—just as I gather he feels. I could never forget them because I saw none of them suffering near me.’

‘ Neither do I,’ said Carew gravely. ‘ If you go merely by what I have just been saying, you will be doing me the greatest injustice—much more than you think. But I do agree with your sisters, that you, with a religion like yours, may find all the assistance

and sympathy you can ever require in *it*, without going to a soured and unscrupulous enthusiast like Foreman.'

'If you,' said Miss Consuelo, 'had been brought up as I have been, you would not perhaps think my religion so sufficient as you do now. And yet, no!' she exclaimed, 'why have I said that? It is not what I mean. I don't know how to express myself. Of course the Church possesses all the teaching and all the sympathy you speak of somewhere—but where? No, I can't go on ; you would not be able to understand me.'

'Try,' said Carew, 'and see. I think I should.'

There was a pause of a moment or two, and then she broke out abruptly, 'Look at my two sisters. They are far better people than I am. The aim of their lives is to be and to do good ; and yet I always feel them to be aiming wide of the mark. They are



constantly thinking of the poor, and, as they imagine, working for the poor ; but—well, to me it all seems like weeding a flower-garden instead of ploughing a field. Mildred, whilst I am under age, manages my affairs for me. She is practical and business-like enough, and has done much to improve some bad cottages and houses. Still, to hear her talk, one would think that bad cottages and houses were sent into the world that we might do ourselves good by improving them ; and, as for Elfrida, she is far more pleased at seeing two hundred people in one chapel than she is pained at seeing twenty families in one house. Sometimes, when I watch her trotting off to Mass in the morning, looking as if she were doing the whole duty of woman, I feel as if, myself, I should never be religious again.'

She spoke low, but with strong and evident feeling. There was a flush in her cheeks ; her eyes were fixed on her lap, and she was

trifling nervously with the crimson feathers of her fan.

‘You know,’ she went on presently, with the rapid frankness that sometimes springs from shyness, ‘you know how my sisters keep guard over me—over the parties I go to, over the men I dance with or speak to. You know that, Mr. Carew, don’t you? No one knows it better than you do.’

‘Yes,’ said Carew; ‘no one better than I.’

‘What care,’ she resumed, ‘they think necessary to keep me from doing something dreadful! Perhaps they are right,’ and she gave a slight ironical laugh. ‘But if we, in our class, can be so easily demoralized by our surroundings, if goodness is a flower that must be so very carefully nursed, what must be the case with the great majority of our poor? I think I am a standing proof that wickedness must be the fruit of circumstances, and that men like Mr. Foreman are the only men who

are right when they tell us we must begin by attacking the circumstances first.'

Carew raised his eyes, and saw that the eldest Miss Burton was watching him. Having observed this, he instinctively raised his voice, and addressed his answer to the company in general rather than to Miss Consuelo.

'My quarrel with Foreman,' he said, 'is not that he wishes to alleviate misery, but that, as a matter of fact, he adds to it. As a preliminary to satisfying the natural wants of the poor, he thinks he must madden them with wants that are exotic and unnatural. To the pangs of poverty he must add the pangs of envy; and this you may take for granted—if poverty is the parent of some sins, envy is the parent of more; and the wants of poverty can be appeased, but the wants of envy are insatiable. Poverty is the thirst of a man on earth; envy is the thirst of a man in hell.'

'My dear Mr. Carew,' Mrs. Harley here

interposed, 'do you think for one instant that, were there no Mr. Foreman in existence, the people could possibly rest content in the state in which they are now? Do you think that sooner or later they will not insist on a change?'

'They have taken,' said Carew, 'a good many thousand years to think about it; and they are no worse off now than they have been in other ages. Suffering and want there have always been in the world. No one can deplore this more than I do; but to exaggerate the fact is even more mischievous than to neglect it. Multitudes of the poor, so far as happiness goes, enjoy practically as good a chance as the rich, until the agitator comes like the harpy, to ruin their simple banquet.'

'It's all very well,' retorted Mrs. Harley, 'for us to sit still and say misery has always existed, and the people have always borne it; but in the first place, we must

remember that by this time we have educated them. We have made their skins tender and sensitive, and they are now maddened by things which they hardly felt before.'

'I admit,' said Carew drily, 'that education, as the Radicals conceive it, is a crueller engine of torture than was ever dreamed of by Nero.'

'Oh, but,' said Mrs. Harley, her manner growing more and more earnest, 'the hardest and cruellest evils are those which, unhappily, it needs no education to point out to us; and these, in our great cities at least, certainly are increasing. Think of these terrible periods, which people now call crises, when men by thousands, with wives and children dependent on them—strong men, men willing to work—rise up in the morning without any certainty at all that they will be able to earn so much as a crust of bread by the evening.'

'Yes,' said Carew; 'but be fair as well as

compassionate. There are crises now ; in old days there were famines.'

'Think,' Mrs. Harley went on, 'of the mothers who see their children dying simply for the want of a breath of wholesome air ; and they know all the while what wealth is being wasted round them. It *is* a hard life, and it *is* a bitter life. It is hard enough when trade is good ; but when trade is depressed, as it is now, no one can conceive it who has not looked close at it.'

'Things,' said Carew, 'have been often as bad before.'

'It seems,' said Mrs. Harley, 'that the people themselves don't think so. Anyhow, even if their burdens have not increased, what has increased is their own impatience of bearing them. Have you ever looked into the faces of an East End mob ? Have you ever realized what an appalling sight they are ? The French Ambassador has several times said to me that

he thinks things in England in a most critical and dangerous condition, and that the savage and sullen spirit fermenting throughout the country now is just what there was in Paris before the great Revolution. And at this moment, to add to it, there is all the wild excitement of a general election, which will largely be managed by agitators. Nothing would surprise me less, if we have hard weather this spring, and the misery of cold is added to the misery of hunger, than to hear of serious troubles and outbreaks in London, and elsewhere also. Did you read the accounts of what was said and what happened at Foreman's street meetings some two months ago? He is going to repeat them as soon as ever he can get home again.'

Mrs. Harley was here interrupted by a loud rap at the door. Throughout the room there was a startled sense of expectation, broken only by Mrs. Harley's faint 'Come in.'



Then the door was thrown open wide by a waiter, and there, framed in the doorway, was the figure of Mr. Inigo. One of those sudden silences fell on the whole party which, so far as their meaning goes, are a kind of congealed laugh, and which fill a room with an atmosphere of slightly displeased surprise. This, however, gave Mr. Inigo no distress whatever. It seemed, on the contrary, to be his native element, and he entered it as naturally as a duck takes to the water. The punctilious but blank politeness of Mr. and Mrs. Harley and the slight bows of the Miss Burtons, did nothing to disturb his usual solemn smile and his odd composite air of determined yet apologetic assurance. Indeed, in little more than a minute he was sipping a cup of coffee; and, unconscious of having silenced one conversation by his entrance, to make up for it he was already leading another. Oddly enough, too, he commanded an attentive hearing.

‘I confess,’ he said to Mrs. Harley, ‘considering all the things that probably will be happening at home, I am surprised at your spending the whole winter abroad. I shall be back in London by the week after next, at farthest. And you, Miss Burton—do you mean to tell me actually that you will be away also?’

Mr. Inigo’s voice grew very grave and impressive. ‘I think it’s a pity,’ he said. ‘We may expect many things to be happening soon in London—several of them very important—which will practically change the whole aspect of society. Nobody ought to miss them.’

If Mr. Inigo had startled his hearers at first, he startled them now still more. They were filled with a double wonder—first at his train of thought being so nearly the same as their own, and secondly at his being capable of such a train of thought at all. ‘And pray how,’ said Mrs. Harley, with an odd puzzled

expression, 'pray how, Mr. Inigo, do you get this gift of prophecy?'

Mr. Inigo eyed the company one by one, the light of suppressed knowledge sparkling in each pupil; and at last he gave utterance to this astonishing answer. 'Ah,' he said, 'ah—a little bird has told me.'

If he liked attention, he certainly had it now, for everyone stared blankly at him.

'You certainly,' said Mrs. Harley, 'take the matter very philosophically.'

'Oh,' said Mr. Inigo, 'as for me, I shall be back in a fortnight, so I shall come in for everything, and nothing will have begun before then. It will be three weeks, in fact, before the real movement is perceptible; not that even now there are not premonitory symptoms. For instance,' he continued, 'take my own case. The week after next I have three dinners in London already, and I think probably a funeral—poor Lord Bayham's.

A very smart—I mean to say, a very sad affair that will be. Everyone about the Court will, of course have to be there. Gull, I am told, gives him only ten days more. It's very sad. He was a dear, dear friend of mine. He used to ask me to luncheon three times every season. However,' Mr. Inigo continued, suppressing an elaborate sigh, 'what I was going to tell you is this. The week after, the little bird I spoke of, has told me that there will be a fancy ball in a house we all know of at one corner of Grosvenor Square; and another, two days later—I am not at liberty to say where; and in all probability there will be three Royalties at it. Now these are specimens, but they are specimens only, of all the things we may very soon be expecting. Why, there's been nothing like it, out of June and July, before.'

Mr. Inigo's news was received in discreet silence, which seemed to him to argue absorbed attention; and presently turning from

the social future in England, he proceeded to discuss the social present on the Riviera. He gave a brief analysis of the Visitors' List at Cannes, from which it appeared that, of the villas let for the winter, two only had been taken by English peers. 'In fact,' he concluded, 'the whole place is going to the dogs.' Then, like a bird winging its way back to its young ones, he returned to the subject of his own engagements in London; and he might have gone on for some indefinite time discussing them, if it had not been for an accidental remark of Carew's.

A pause occurring in Mr. Inigo's list of gaieties, Carew said, with a smile: 'I suppose you never honour with your company Mr. Foreman's *al fresco* entertainments?'

It was an unambitious joke, and the company received it as such—all except Mr. Inigo. He certainly had not a reputation for being sensitive; but for some unaccount-

able reason this piece of banter seemed to offend and stagger him. He stared at Carew in silence, the smile died from his lips, and at last he said, 'I beg your pardon,' in a manner which, had he ever ventured to let his words go out of a walk, would have plainly expressed a mixture of surprise, suspicion, and ferocity. Mrs. Harley concluded that he thought he was being laughed at; and, though not in her heart at all sorry that he should think so, she civilly tried to set matters right again. 'We have been talking,' she explained, 'about socialism in the East End, and Mr. Foreman's street meetings. But that, I suppose, has very little interest for you.'

Mr. Inigo saw that she wished to please him. His smile, like a sun through clouds, made fitful struggles to shine out again. But his spirits flagged; his air of triumph was gone; he was no longer jubilant in the

memory of having had twelve invitations for a single night last season ; and before long he rose and took his departure. ' I must go,' he said, nerving himself to retire with honour, ' and see if a telegram has come for me from the Grand Duke about to-morrow. Poor old boy, I'm afraid he's getting very shaky.'

He closed the door, and descended the stairs slowly. There were no listeners, but had there been any, and had their ears been sharp enough, they might have overheard him muttering, in a tone of anger and perplexity, ' I wonder if that fellow Carew could have meant any impertinence by that which he said just now. Let me catch him spreading any absurd stories about me, and I little know myself if I am not even with him some day !'

The Miss Burtons presently rose to depart also, and they accepted with a very good grace, and without any air of distance,



Carew's natural offer to see them back to their hotel. He told the Harleys, as he said good-night to them, that he would call the following morning, before he went back to the château, to know on what day he might expect them to come to him; and he even ventured during his short walk with the Miss Burtons, on a diffident suggestion that they too should drive over and lunch there. Miss Elfrida's answer, however, though good-natured, was not altogether encouraging.

‘Thank you,’ she said, with a little nervous laugh. ‘The expedition would, I am sure, be most interesting.’ But she immediately added that they were leaving Nice soon, and that, for the next few days, their time was already occupied. This statement brought them to the portico of the hotel; and as she at once followed it by an abrupt though friendly good-night, Carew felt that even yet he was but half restored to their

confidence. The next instant, however, there was some compensation for him ; and this was the glance that Miss Consuelo gave him as she and her sisters were disappearing through the folding-doors. Carew did not follow them. He felt no inclination as yet to retire to rest, and he remained meditating outside in the moonlight.





## CHAPTER VII.



THE hotel was one which opened on the *Promenade des Anglais* ; and before Carew's eyes, as he stood silent and solitary, there rose and fell the mysterious flash of the Mediterranean. In his state of mind at the moment, the sight had a special charm for him. The air, too, was warm as the air of a summer evening ; and far and faint, from an undistinguishable quarter, there came to his ears for an instant a vague sound of music, floating and dying away like a wandering scent of flowers. He looked at his watch. It was far earlier than he had thought

it was. It was only half-past ten. He lighted a cigarette ; and, obeying some restless impulse, he crossed the road to the side nearest the sea.

He stood for some moments, leaning on his stick, and taking the scene in. The moon was shining brilliantly, and right away from him, following the long curve of the coast, the broad esplanade, with its fringe of gas-lamps, seemed to stretch itself out into the heart of some unknown solitude. On one side of it was the sea, on the other its succession of houses, blanched like a row of lilies—lodging-houses, villas, hotels, and, conspicuous at a certain distance, the lighted blinds and windows of the great *Cercle de la Méditerranée*. In those windows there was a certain strange suggestiveness. They gave to the moonlight a sense of passion and recklessness, which was presently added to by the bells of a smart-looking Russian carriage, as it rattled by,

with two men in sables in it, and left in its wake a faint smell of cigarette-smoke. Meanwhile, far off on the horizon the lighthouse of the Cap d'Antibes was shining with its steadfast eye ; and near at hand some vessels were lying black in the moon-track, whose coloured lights, as they moved almost imperceptibly, gleamed like rubies and emeralds floating on the breast of the pale waters.

The hour and the scene were full of hints and whisperings, as various as the thoughts by which Carew was already agitated ; and his mind began to work as if under some new stimulus. He was conscious of a sense not of happiness but of exaltation. He was not happy ; on the contrary, he was perplexed and anxious : but all his feelings and perceptions, whether of trouble or of pleasure, seemed to him to be quickened, and, somehow, to move to music. This was the case even with his sense of the ridiculous, as he almost

directly realized ; for in another moment, on the opposite side of road, he caught sight of the figure of Mr. Inigo posting off in the direction of the Cercle, and intent, as Carew divined, on finding some fashionable acquaintance, open to being victimized into what might be called a friend. Carew began moving in the same direction also, with no other purpose than to prolong the grotesque amusement he was aware of in watching the other. Having, however, been once set walking, it was not long before he quickened his pace, and was soon lost in thoughts with which Mr. Inigo had but little connection.

At first they were far from pleasing. He knew that he had carried away from Mrs. Harley's some secret discontent with himself. Now this discontent began to disclose its nature. The part he had taken in the evening's conversation came back to him ; and certain of his sentences, like accusing spirits,

began to say themselves over and over again to him. They were not sentences that he had uttered to Miss Consuelo Burton. They had nothing to do directly either with her or her sisters ; though with her, no doubt, indirectly they had to do. What they referred to was the poor in the modern world—the great industrial masses ; and the claims and struggles which Mrs. Harley said would be made by them.

‘ And I,’ he began murmuring, ‘ have done nothing but meet these claims with a sneer. I set them aside this evening with a bitter and contemptuous flippancy, as if they were nothing but the cant of a sect, or of some scheming radical faction. And all the while I myself believe in them, with a belief that is always at my heart like a dull physical pain. For the past two years what have I thought of else ? All the future is contained in them—in these hopes and claims of the people—the duties, the hopes, the fears, the



whole life of the world. And we'—his reflections here grew less distinct again—'and we, what will be our part? Is our world—the world of us who are made of different clay from the others, of us who inherit all the traditions of centuries—is that world to dissolve like a dream, and leave no trace behind it? Or shall we find that still we have a place amongst the leaders left to us?'

Presently, into thoughts like these a new image intruded itself, and this was the image of Miss Consuelo Burton. It seemed to come to him like an answer to his vague questions. The feminine charms of her smile, her face, her figure, all came back to him, making a vivid picture; but it was not this that at the present moment appealed to him. What appealed to him was the pride that betrayed itself in her every movement, the self-possession underlying every sign of embarrassment; and, above all, a look that he had seen in her

eyes that evening—a look of want and inquiry, of desolation and vivid expectancy—a look in whose beauty there was nothing to flatter his own vanity, but which made him exclaim half aloud to himself at the thought of it, ‘She too watches as I watch, but she can see farther. She asks for an answer. She must and she will command one. If ever a woman’s face meant anything, hers this evening meant, “Show me the face of Duty.”’

His thoughts were moving something like clouds in moonlight, not disconnected in any abrupt way, but constantly dissolving and shifting into new and changing shapes. Often, so far as his own consciousness went, he was little more than a passive, and even an absent spectator of them ; but now and again they would, as it were, arrest him ; and, with his whole intention, he would take an active part in them. It was thus that his thoughts be-

haved with regard to Miss Consuelo Burton. 'Show me the face of Duty.' He said this to himself several times over, as if it gradually merged into a personal ejaculation of his own; and then, after some minutes of wandering and indistinct meditation, he caught himself once more murmuring in articulate and coherent words.

'Different!' he said. 'I should think she was different! Nothing could produce her but a race separate from the rest of the world—separate from them and completely above them. Nothing could produce her but that which has produced her—the old aristocracy of an old country such as ours. Yes, we *are* different,' and as he said this his pace grew quicker, and his steps as they beat the pavement took something of the emphasis of his thoughts, 'we who can look back through the vistas of centuries, and hear the past speak to us, in our own private language, of our birth-

right of rule and leadership. Through the avenues of the past voices come echoing down to us, which the people can never hear. They place us for ever on a different level from theirs ; they make for us, if we only choose to listen to them, a second conscience, an added moral faculty.—'

Here, both in his thoughts and his walk, he stopped short suddenly, interrupting himself with a low ironical laugh. 'And much good,' he exclaimed, 'this faculty does us! How does it advise us to exert ourselves? And how do we try to exert ourselves?' And like many other men perplexed with moral problems, he forgot his laughter, and looked up at the stars. One or two of the constellations he instantly put a name to ; and he then began idly reflecting how completely he had forgotten the others. Presently, by one of those whimsical caprices with which our thoughts so often startle and entertain us, he found

himself dwelling on the image of an old reflecting telescope, once the toy of his boyhood on many a summer night. A moment more, and, like a figure in a shaken kaleidoscope, that image was gone, and in place of it was the face of Miss Consuelo Burton. 'Her eyes,' he said, 'to me are like the astronomer's speculum, in which I see the star that my naked eye cannot see—the star of duty and labour, that shines over the gate of heaven. The dreams of passion—is this a time for these, when the world is full of trouble, and change, and danger? My star is the star not of passion, but of sacrifice.'

Occupied still with reflections of this kind—with that unwritten poetry which at times visits nearly all of us, and which lifts the minds of the most prosaic to higher levels on the storm of its 'unheard melodies'—he gradually became aware of some external influence by which his mood underwent an

unbidden change ; and the dreams of passion, which were a moment ago so distant, invaded him, like music, with a tender and yet tumultuous sadness. He started as he realized what the external influence was. It actually was music in the literal sense of the word ; and he felt convinced, though he hardly knew why, that it was the same which had fallen on his ears as he was quitting the portico of the hotel. He had not even asked himself then what it was that produced it. He now felt certain that it was a woman's voice.

He listened intently. For a moment it became inaudible. He waited, and then again there swelled another passionate cadence. Faint and far off as it seemed, he could not mistake its meaning. He moved slowly in the direction from which he judged it proceeded, keeping his eyes fixed on the windows of the houses opposite him. Here and there,



through blinds or transparent curtains, was a glow of yellow lamplight ; but in most cases the Venetian shutters were closed, with the moonlight lying white on them. The voice had now ceased. There was no one stirring. The whole Promenade was silent. Presently, as he was beginning to think that his search would prove useless, he heard—and now not very far off from him—the clear notes of a piano. His eye instinctively fixed on a semi-detached villa, standing back from the road, with a raised garden in front of it. The ground-floor windows were almost concealed from view ; but the upper part of them could be seen from the pavement opposite ; and Carew perceived that a bright light was shining from them, and that one of them was wide open. He had found the house at last ; this was at once plain to him ; and, conscious of a pleasant, half-boyish expectancy, he sat down on a seat which opportunely tempted him, and watched and



waited for the song which he divined was imminent.

A few more chords, struck, it seemed, almost at random, came sounding across to him, rich and deep and vibrating, and above them the brilliant ripple of a few notes in the treble; but they suggested no air—nothing but the touch of a musician. All of a sudden, however, he felt them change their character, and appeal to a something deep down in his memory. They suggested something he was certain he had heard before. But when, and where? he asked. In a moment the doubt was answered. In a moment, to his surprise, the following song broke on him. It was not sung loudly, but with a liquid and mournful softness; yet every word was distinct, for his memory now assisted his hearing.

*' Oh, World! whose days like sunlit waters glide,  
Whose music links the midnight with the morrow,  
Who for thine own hast Beauty, Power, and Pride—  
Oh, World, what art thou?' And the World replied,  
' A husk of pleasure round a heart of sorrow.'*

*' Oh, Child of God ! thou who hast sought thy way  
Where all this music sounds, this sunlight gleams,  
Mid Pride, and Power, and Beauty day by day—  
And what art thou ? ' I heard my own soul say,  
' A wandering sorrow in a world of dreams.'*

That song Carew had heard once before, and he had heard it once only ; and the memory of the woman who then sang it to him breathed from the air and verses as if it had been some perfume they were full of. ' Could it be she who was now singing it ? ' he at once began to ask himself. There were many reasons for rejecting the idea as fantastic ; yet there in the moonlight he could not resist playing with it ; and he remained, when the song had ceased, still sitting and still watching the villa. There was no more music ; but presently he heard, or thought he heard, the voice of a woman talking ; and then another sound which, though faint, was quite unmistakable—the rattle of an electric bell. Then, a second or two later, he saw the

top of one of the open window-sashes move a little ; he heard a light sound of gravel crunching under footsteps, and became aware that someone was approaching the end of the garden.

Half ashamed of being caught there listening, and yet still more ashamed of letting such a feeling betray itself, he kept his position with what he hoped was an air of indifference, pretending to be occupied for the moment with a cigarette and a matchbox. Meanwhile he was conscious that a female figure had advanced to the balustrade, and was leaning her arms on it, as she stood between two palm-plants.

A vague impression was conveyed to him of colour, and silk, and glitter ; but it was some moments before he collected courage to raise his eyes and look at the apparition directly. The moment he did so he sat upright with a start. The woman he saw

before him was so singular and so brilliant in her aspect, that she might well have arrested the attention of anyone ; though had it not been for an air of sadness and refinement about her, she would hardly have suggested to the moralist a world he would call respectable. She was closely enveloped in a light blue opera-cloak bordered with white fur and gorgeous with gold embroideries. On her arms, which were partly visible, and were of dazzling whiteness, was a gleam and a flash of diamonds ; whilst her hair, of the palest flaxen, with a few starry blossoms in it, shone over her forehead like a tissue of woven moonbeams.

She must have seen Carew ; but she was not looking at or attending to him. Her lips were parted, as if with a soundless sigh ; and her eyes seemed to be gazing far away upon the sea. She might have passed for a siren taken from her native element, and

longing for the oblivion to which she had once tempted others.

If she, however, was not noticing Carew, Carew, for his part, was intently staring at her; and a full minute had hardly elapsed since her appearance, when he rose from his seat, walked straight across the road to her, and, raising his hat as he did so, exclaimed, 'Madame de Saint Valery!'

She started at first, with a start of alarm and wonder; for though she had been aware of a figure seated on the bench opposite her, she had given it no attention: but before Carew had reached the pavement under her, she had divined who he was, and with a gasp had pronounced his name.

'You here!' she said. 'And to think of *you* here!'

'Why not?' he replied. 'This is surely a place of meetings. It is I, rather, who should be surprised at the sight of you. When

last I heard of you, I heard you were in South America.'

'You have heard much about me probably that had very little truth in it. Some of your friends may even have told you I was enjoying myself. But answer me this—if you did not know I was here, how is it that I find you watching my windows?'

'Your song brought me,' he said. 'I came to it like a moth to a candle. Do you remember the time when I heard you sing it first? Until to-night I have never heard it since.'

'Since then,' she murmured, 'many things have happened to me.'

Carew bent his head, and said in a low tone, 'What things?'

'I have eaten the fruit that you urged me not to eat.'

'Well,' said Carew, with his head still bent, 'and was the fruit good for food? What have you found life since then?'

‘Listen,’ she said, and she leaned forward and looked down on him, ‘shall I tell you what I have found life since then—yes, and before then?’

‘Tell me,’ he answered.

She paused till he raised his eyes to her; and then, in a low voice that was almost as musical as her singing, said slowly :

“A husk of pleasure round a heart of sorrow.”

Carew looked at her with an odd sensation of wonder. There was something in her radiant aspect, touched as it was with melancholy, which made it seem as though some unreal light was playing on her, and produced a feeling in him that he was going through a scene in an opera, rather than one in actual life. He was not pleased at the meeting. He was not pleased with the memories awakened by it. He had long ceased to think Madame de Saint Valery worthy of the interest he had



once felt in her, and the trouble he had taken to advise her and guide her prudently. Yet all the same, as he heard her voice and looked at her, he began to understand again a thing which he had almost forgotten—how that interest which he had once felt had been excited by her. Presently, however, his attention was suddenly diverted ; she too, at the same moment, turned her head rapidly ; and there, standing close beside her, was another female form, as beautiful or even more beautiful than her own. The hair was slightly darker, the dress was far simpler, and there was something childlike in the unabashed soft eyes.

Madame de Saint Valery exhibited no confusion on seeing her. ‘Violet,’ she said, ‘here is an old friend of mine, Mr. Carew. Mr. Carew, I think you have never met my cousin, Miss Capel.’

On Miss Capel’s eyes Carew’s were fixed

intently, and hers met his without any sign of flinching.

‘Yes,’ he said, ‘I think I *have* met her—and so few hours ago, that I hope she has not forgotten it. I had the good luck to prevent her losing her fan. It was you, wasn’t it?’ he went on, addressing the fair stranger directly. ‘Indeed, if I am not mistaken, there is that very fan in your hand now. Let me look at it—will you?—and I then shall be quite sure.’

She made no movement whatever to do as Carew asked her; but she looked at him fixedly as if he had been some inanimate object, and a grave tantalizing smile became slowly visible on her face. Then, by way of answer, she opened the fan wide, and with a little abrupt gesture pressed it against her breast. Carew, as he watched her standing in this attitude, was conscious of precisely the same impression as that which her presence

had produced on him at their first meeting amongst the mountains. Again it was as if some new country were opening out before him, all its ways blossoming with lilacs and hawthorns, full of the scents and the alluring air of spring, and yet sad, like spring, with a longing for something that is yet to come. This state of mind, however, was almost in an instant disturbed by the appearance of a servant, who spoke to Madame de Saint Valery; and Carew gathered from what the man said that there was a carriage at the door to take Miss Capel away.

‘And so,’ he said, ‘you are not living with your cousin?’

‘No,’ she replied, with an accent of slight displeasure at the question. ‘I am with my parents. They have been to-night to the theatre, and I must be back by the same time that they are.’

‘Indeed you must,’ said Madame de Saint

Valery. ‘This young lady is kept in the very greatest order. It is only by way of a treat that I have been allowed to have her this evening. Violet, come, it is late; your maid is waiting for you, and we must bid Mr. Carew good-night. Perhaps, if he is staying long here, he will come and see me some day.’

Carew, left once more to himself, remained for a few moments eyeing the villa abstractedly; and then turned to resume his walk along the *Promenade des Anglais*. It was perfectly quiet. Two men, indeed, just as he was in the act of turning, were visible at a short distance, strolling slowly arm-in-arm together; but they disappeared presently down a side street, and except for Carew himself, there was not a creature stirring.

Stimulated by the solitude, his meditations became as busy as ever again. He was not sorry to have escaped from Madame de Saint

Valery; still he could not help thinking about her, and wondering what kind of life she was leading. He soon found, however, that his thoughts persisted in dwelling on her, less on her own account than on account of her relationship to the girl—to the strange magnetic presence, who was with her. That soft regard, which was at once earnest and languid, passionate and yet ingenuous, mature and yet childlike, haunted his memory as though it were still present. Then the image recurred to him of Miss Consuelo Burton, and he broke for a moment into a low laugh of amusement at the fickleness and agility with which his sentiments changed their object. But the sense of amusement presently died away; and though these two female figures still held their ground in his consciousness, he ceased to regard the fact in a grotesque or ludicrous light. On the contrary, as he pursued his walk, it assumed a meaning that grew in depth and in suggest-

iveness, until two ways of life seemed opening out before him; and one of these figures urged him to tread the one, and the other allured and pleaded with him to be her companion on the other. They were two ways, leading to two different worlds.

One was the world of love, and passion, and poetry, where the hidden prizes of life seemed to be sleeping in the heart, as the rose in the unfolded bud, or the statue in the unhewn marble. The other was a world of ever-widening duties, where love was not absent, but by itself never could satisfy. It was a world where lovers looked beyond their own circle of bliss, and felt that there could be no rest for the soul but in suffering for those that suffer and labouring for those whose lot their labour could make lighter, and where their deepest union was not when their eyes met, but when side by side they were fixed on a common altar of sacrifice.

‘Once,’ he said, ‘it was enough to work out one’s own salvation—to see that the blossom of one’s own heart expanded, and that the dew of the spirit was lying clear upon it; but now—is not the world changing? Is it any longer enough if my rose blossoms whilst a million rose-trees round me are leafless and have only thorns? Can I,’ and he seemed to see the eyes of Miss Consuelo Burton looking not at but away from him, ‘can I forget that the poor are suffering, merely because I may see none suffering round me?’

The current of these reflections was here suddenly broken by a hand laid on his arm, and a man’s voice at his ear. He started and looked round, and there at his side was Mr. Inigo. Whether Mr. Inigo’s resentment, whatever its cause, had actually evaporated or no, there was at all events no trace of it in either his look or manner. On the contrary,



his eyes gleamed with an expression of intimate knowingness, and fixing them on Carew, as if they were a couple of gimlets, he said, after a moment's pause :

‘ Upon my word, you’re a pretty fellow, you are! We saw you just now—the Prince and I, as we were passing—going through a charming little scene with Madame de Saint Valery—something quite in the style of Romeo and Juliet. I can tell you that there’s been a regular sensation about her at Nice this winter.’

Carew stared at Mr. Inigo with a frigid air of surprise.

‘ There has been,’ he said, ‘ as you amusingly suggest, an impromptu play. It seems that, also, there has been an impromptu audience.’

Mr. Inigo winced slightly, as if he had been accused of eavesdropping ; and then, in a voice of calm and lofty explanation, ‘ I passed you,’ he said, ‘ just now, as I was

seeing Prince Olgourki home. I went back with him from the *Cercle*, as far as his own door.' He seemed as he spoke to be buoyed up above the levels of criticism ; and presently with a sigh of proud and privileged sorrow, 'By the way,' he added, 'the beggar—he's just won twelve hundred francs from me—bad luck to him!'

By this time they were close to their hotel, and Carew, acknowledging the information with distant but scrupulous politeness, bade Mr. Inigo good-night and made an instant escape from him.

Mr. Inigo stood for a moment motionless, staring at the door by which Carew had entered. 'Confound the fellow!' he muttered. 'Who is he, I should like to know, that he should give himself these deuced airs with me? If he did mean anything by that which he said just now—if—— Well, trust me for being even with him, that's all!'



## CHAPTER VIII.



AREW the following evening was once more in his château. He had gone early in the day to Mrs. Harley's hotel, but had not at once paid his respects to her. He had found some mysterious business there, of which he told her nothing. Having transacted this, he had then spent half an hour with her, and finally made an arrangement that she and her husband should come to him three days later, which would give him time to communicate with the other friends he was expecting. He was now sitting in solitude at his writing-table, and before he went to bed he had

finished the following letter. It was a letter to Mrs. Harley.

‘Since,’ it began, ‘I am so soon to see you again, you will wonder, on receiving this, what on earth I can have to say to you. Well, first of all, I am going to say something which certainly sounds most inhospitable. Glad as I am that you are coming, I am glad you are not coming till Thursday. I will now tell you my reason. There are one or two things as to which I wish to explain myself ; I should like to do so before we meet again ; and I can do so better by writing than I could by word of mouth. In a moment you will see my meaning.

‘Whenever we meet, as you truly said yesterday, we have always, for some time past, got on the same subjects—subjects so near to the daily lives of all of us, but which people in our class are accustomed to think so little about. You know, of course, what

I am speaking of: not of the incidents of mere party politics, but of something compared to which these are merely bubbles on the surface. I am speaking of our existing social civilization, and our own class in particular, with the future that lies before it—of wealth and poverty, of privilege, and of popular power. We get on these subjects because we both feel their importance—because we both feel that the history of our own coming years is involved in them. I know, for my part, that I think about little else. Night and day they disturb and occupy me, haunting my mind as rooks haunt a rookery. The noise of society may for a time frighten them away, but they come back again the moment the noise ceases, and all the boughs are black with them. I say they are like rooks. So they are, but with a difference. They have the habits of rooks, but they have the voices of ravens.

‘However, let that pass. The practical point is this. When you come here next Friday, we shall no doubt begin about them again; and I want first to say one or two things to you, which will help you to see clearly what my own position is. You know how your own views on some social points surprise me. You know, in fact, how—not to mince matters—I can hardly believe that you are quite as sincere in them as you fancy. You, a woman of old and distinguished family, bred in the very heart of an aristocratic society, with the tastes of an aristocracy visible in every one of your surroundings, and the manners of an aristocracy visible in every instinctive movement—in the way you carry your head, in the little things you laugh at—it is impossible for me to believe that you can really ignore the difference between yourself and—well, how shall I best describe them?—those excellent people

we were talking about yesterday, who, however great they may be in point of talent, have not the advantages of the same social history. I am not talking of the qualities which distinguish you as an individual. I am talking of those which distinguish you as belonging to a certain class. For social purposes, individual qualities are very little more than the strings are in a violin ; but that class which you belong to, with its natural position, with its memories, with its historic consciousness, is the body of the violin itself. And think what a structure this violin is ! All the centuries of our country's life are embodied in it. It is as subtle a piece of work as any masterpiece of Stradivarius ; and suppose it destroyed, before we could reproduce it we should have to reproduce a thousand years of history. Think what you mean yourself by high-bred ladies and gentlemen. Think of the social



tone that prevails amongst them. You will realize as fully as I do that its ease combined with courtesy, its grace without affectation, is possible only amongst a privileged circle of people with a special present position which reposes on a special past.

‘ Have I said one word in which you do not agree with me ? In spite of all your fondness for the “ other people ” who amuse you so much, I am perfectly confident that you must agree with me thus far. Now, however, I am going to part company with you, and soar into the regions of what you would call the ridiculous. I’m not at all certain that I don’t myself agree with you. But I can’t help it. What I feel I feel. Do you know old Lady Mangotsfield ? Just before I left London I dined with her, and during dinner the conversation turned upon heraldry. “ My dear,” she said to me, “ we have none of us our right number of quarter-

ings ; our shocking system of marriage has always prevented that. You and I ought both of us to have a hundred and twenty-eight. We are the only people in England they would not be thrown away upon." Well, so far as I am concerned, Lady Mangotsfield was perfectly right. As for a hundred and twenty-eight, I won't speak about that. I will content myself with sixty-four ; and I can honestly tell you that, were such a bargain possible, I would, for the power to prove my own sixty-four quarterings, pay a good third of the income that will be probably mine some day. In the male line, as you know, we go straight back to the Conquest ; and we have married into some of the very noblest families, not only of England, but of France and Italy also. But—there is always a *but* somewhere—we have married into other families as well ; and if, in such a place as the old hall at Otterton—the

old hall which it has always been my dream to restore—I were to prepare places for the sixty-four shields I speak of, twenty of them at least would be blanks. Each of the blanks, every time I looked at it, would be a blow to me. Can you imagine anything sillier? I doubt if I can; and the logic of my prejudices is, in actual life, constantly melted or blown to the winds by friendship. But, particular cases apart, the prejudice still exists in me. It is deep in my heart; I can't get rid of it. My feelings as to this matter are Austrian far more than English; and when I hear it discussed whether such and such a man is a gentleman, I long to put the question in the simpler language of the Continent, and ask to be told whether or no he is *noble*.

‘ This being so, you will easily enough understand the constant sense of—what shall I call it?—anger, contemptuous amusement,

and blank despair for my country, with which I see the irruption of these new classes into Parliament. The very presence of such a man as Mr. Snapper in the Cabinet seems to me like a rotten egg flung in the face of civilization. I was present at a debate not very long ago. Good heavens! what hats, what boots—above all, what hair! Do you remember what Voltaire said of the Prophet Habakkuk? “A man with a name like that is capable of anything.” Well, men with beards and with expressions like that are capable of anything also. Brutes! Were I honestly to speak in public what I really feel in private, there is not, at this moment, a popular audience in England which would not hoot me, or laugh me, or else pelt me, from the platform.

‘ There’s one side of me ; and I think I have drawn it plainly enough. I now come to the other ; and it is this other side which

I am most anxious to show you. During the last three or four years—the very years during which my class prejudices have been strengthening—I have been setting myself to do something which I never did before. I have been studying the condition, the sorrows, the claims, and the hopes of the poor. I have been studying the classes who live by manual labour—those on whose shoulders all civilization rests.

‘How many of us die, having known that these classes exist, and yet having never, in any vital way, realized it! I have realized it at last; the idea of them and their lot has become constantly present to me, and I have been affected by it very much in the same way as a man who has passed his whole life by a duck-pond is affected by the sight of the sea-shore and of the Atlantic.

‘I said just now, in speaking of social tone, in speaking of certain commanding and

graceful qualities, that the individual as an individual was nothing more than a violin string, whilst the body of the violin, on which the tone depended, was an historical and hereditary aristocracy. Let me use the same comparison again, but with a deeper meaning. If an historical aristocracy is the body of the social violin, the People is the body of the moral violoncello. The vibrations of our moral existence become music only through their relations to that, and through the resonance it gives them.

‘ Are you not astonished to hear me speak like this, especially considering the way in which I was speaking only last night, and the wonderful confessions with which I began this letter? And yet, can you wonder that when the People are mentioned I sometimes express contempt—that the very word itself is enough to revolt and shock me? It is like the handle to the door that leads to my own

convictions ; but the Radicals, by fingering it, have made it so foul and filthy that, until it has been washed, I shudder each time I touch it.

‘ Let me believe, however, that so far as you are concerned, I have washed it—that it is perfectly clean ; and that, as I use it now, it is not in the least sticky with any of its usual associations. The popular voice, as I should wish to hear it, would be the quiet murmur of a million happy hearths, not the hootings round so many thousand polling-booths. The word People suggests to me no menace to an aristocracy, but simply the foundation on which all civilization rests ; and the voice which is constantly sounding in my ears, says to me, “ Civilization must cease to rest on squalor and misery.”

‘ Are the two feelings that possess me utterly inconsistent ? Is the pride that makes me resent the presence of an upstart like



Snapper, that makes the very grin on his face and the cut of his coat offensive to me—is that pride inconsistent with the sense of wrong and of foreboding which fills me when I think of the lives of so many of those that labour? I myself cannot believe that it is so. I will not believe it. But you—you, perhaps, will think that my popular sympathies are merely a piece of sentiment with which I idly like to amuse myself in a seclusion, where I have given myself no chance of ever putting them into practice. That, however, is certainly not the case. I love this castle, these walls and towers, these painted ceilings, these carved and emblazoned chimney-pieces, for the same reason that I love these old mediæval towns. I love them because they are to my mind like a mirror in which the past is reflected, when Radicals were not and equality was not dreamed of—the past when men recognized their superiors, and ordered themselves reve-

rently, with no sense of humiliation. But I am here, usually alone, not for the sake merely of flattering my own prejudices ; I am here to continue a study of things which are essentially modern. I am here to study that greatest of modern questions—not how to reconcile the People with their present lot, but how to make their lot one with which they shall be willing to be reconciled.

‘No doubt you will wonder what I can mean by all this. When you come, I will show you.

‘Anyhow, as for my views, here is an honest sketch of them. I wonder if you agree with them. There is one person, at any rate, who, I think, does ; and that is Miss Consuelo Burton. I wish you could have brought her here with you. Unless I misunderstand her on the point I have just alluded to, she would have added much to the interest of the party. But I fear that

her coming is quite out of the question. You shall judge for yourself, however. You saw that her sisters were very fairly civil to me, especially when they found that I was still friends with their Cardinal. But I did venture last night to suggest to them an expedition here, and I saw plainly that they were not anxious to come. It is hardly likely, therefore, that they would let her come without them. Still, if your diplomacy could manage the matter, you know what will please me ; and, now I come to think of it, you might mention to them, what is quite true, that I am expecting amongst my visitors two most excellent Catholics, Lady Chislehurst and a genuine live priest.

‘ You told me yesterday that my friends would be too smart for you. But my priest—will he be too smart ? You won’t say so, I think, when you have seen him. I have mentioned him particularly, not merely as a

bait to catch Miss Consuelo with, but also because a little tale hangs on his visit to me ; and I have confessed to you already so many of my own follies, that I am going to venture to add this to their number.

‘ Well, in spite of my idle life and many faults, some of which have been real enough, some only invented for me, you give me, I know, credit for having at least enough notion of duty to make me unhappy—I don’t say at not doing it, but at not even seeing clearly what ought to be done. You know how widespread is the sense of doubt and bewilderment amongst all classes, and specially amongst our own, as to what we should do with ourselves, not only as moral beings, but also as people inheriting a particular place in society. And I can tell you honestly, and without any exaggeration, that, for my own part, unless I am to loathe my very existence, some clear notion of duty I must possess or

struggle for ; and if other people are to inspire me with any real interest, the same want must be in their natures too.

‘ Such being the case, towards the end of the London season, when many things had gone wrong with me, and all the preceding weeks stared me in the face—a cluster of wasted days—I was sitting one morning in the park, and thinking, with a sense of rest, of making a retreat to my cousin’s beautiful villa, with its fountains, its terraces, and its oleanders, on the breast of the Lago Maggiore. I was thinking of this, when the idea suddenly flashed upon me of getting together a small informal society, whose members were to be bound together only by the four following links. They were all of them to have this same sense I speak of—that we each of us have some duty, could we only find it out ; and that, having no duty, we simply are beasts and fools ; and they were all to

appreciate the changing state of society, sufficiently to see that our duty was no longer clear to us. Secondly, they were all of them, I do not say to be Christians, but at least to regard Christianity with minds open to conviction, and take at their true worth the maudlin inanities of the Humanitarians. Thirdly, as to their personal conduct, there were to be no severe requirements. A member, for instance, would not be expelled even supposing he had run away with another man's wife; though naturally he would not be allowed to bring the lady to our meetings. He would be expelled for one thing only—namely, if, having run away with her, or made himself too agreeable to her, he accommodated his theories to suit his practice, and, by persuading himself that his conduct was right, deliberately closed his ears to the religion which would pronounce it wrong. The last qualification of the members was,



that they were all to be ladies and gentlemen ; and, considering the remarks with which I began this letter, you will know well enough what I mean by that.

‘ And now you will ask, What was this society to do? With what object was it to be got together? The question, I confess, is a little hard to answer. That object, when I try to describe it in words, seems to shrivel up or vanish directly the words touch it ; or, at least, to become so slight and trivial as to look like a quaint fancy strayed into the daylight from a dream. But, if your imagination and sympathy will meet me half-way, you will see, perhaps, that my words suggest more than they actually describe. Well, what the society was to do was this. Its members were simply to meet each other at certain intervals, at various country houses belonging to one or other of them, and such meetings would constitute a kind of informal



retreat. Yes, you say, but what then? When these good people met, what was to be their programme? Were they to read papers, or to have formal discussions, as if they were members of a Social Science Congress? Nothing of the kind. There was to be no programme whatever; nothing out of the common was to be expected of them. They were to be free, if they liked, to behave themselves as idly and as pleasantly as they would if they were paying any ordinary country visit. How, then, you may ask, would such meetings differ from such a visit? They would differ, I hoped, in this way: not in what those concerned would be required to do, but in what they would naturally do. Naturally, easily, without any stiffness or formality, some talk would arise, some exchange of ideas, with regard to those subjects which were the basis of their association. Sometimes it would be cynical, sometimes

flippant; sometimes it would be earnest and serious; sometimes it would deal with the subjects in question directly; sometimes merely by implication, the immediate subject being, perhaps, a piece of gossip. Its tone would vary, and I should expect it to vary. Sometimes there would be little of it, and sometimes much. But I am persuaded that, could my idea ever be carried into execution—and I have by no means given it up—the members would, when such a meeting was over, carry away from it some idea or experience which would make life certainly richer, possibly more clear, and which, even if it did not make them practically more useful, would at any rate sharpen their moral sight sufficiently to make their uselessness a deeper and more unpardonable sin.

‘Well, such was my scheme. I conceived it, as I told you, in a moment of depression and perplexity, when I felt the want of some

sense of companionship ; and though I cannot say that, as yet, my society is actually formed, I have one or two friends who already understand me, and are willing, when the occasion comes, to be members of it. One of them is the Catholic priest I spoke of. The other is Lord Aiden. These are not all, but I mention them specially now, because they will both, I hope, be here during your visit.

‘Lord Aiden you know ; so I needn’t say much about him. But think of him for a moment, and I am quite sure you will agree with me that he is the very man cut out to be a brother of our order. No doubt he is not a man who directly would guide or strengthen us. He wants a new gospel ; he certainly has not got one, and even as for his wants, he takes them rather lazily ; but his presence always seems to fill a room with suggestion. Think how many of the fruits

of life he has tasted. He has written poetry which is read all over Europe ; all over Europe women have fallen in love with him : at the same time, he has been an astute man of affairs, and has occupied one of the most splendid and brilliant posts which a public career can offer a British subject. And yet he has not found the pearl of price. He is old enough to know that he has not found it. He is not so old that he has lost the desire to find it.

“ “ Yes,” you will say, “ Lord Aiden is all very well ; but what possible place in your society can there be for a Catholic priest ? Whether he is right or wrong in his idea of duty, what duty is must, for him, be beyond question. He has got his pearl, or what he thinks his pearl, and he must stick to it.” I expect you will say that ; it is a very natural thought ; but wait till you see him, and then you will think differently. You

164 don't like Papists, I know ; but you won't object to this one. I don't mean to tell you that he is not perfectly orthodox ; and he's just as intolerant as most intellectual Catholics are,—that is to say, for a man who has any convictions, he is certainly one of the most tolerant men imaginable. He is also a perfect man of the world. He was once in the Guards, once he stood for Parliament, and he once had a confidential appointment under a Conservative Home Secretary. If it were not for his dress, you would not on first meeting him suspect him to be a priest. You would only, perhaps, wonder at two things—the shadow on his face as of premature old age, and the knowledge of the world stamped on it, with the absence of any taint of the world. Also, unless the conversation were to turn directly on religion, you might talk for days to him without knowing what his religion was. I

say *you* might ; but there I am wrong, and I retract the word. You would, I think, in time detect the truth ; but this would not be because he flashed his spiritual lamp into your eyes, but because, though the lamp was hidden, you would recognize the light that fell from it on all the secular subjects which have been for years past engrossing him. What these subjects are you will discover when you come here ; and I think the discovery will be very interesting and wholesome for you.

‘ There is nothing in him that could offend, there is nothing in him that could even annoy you ; but there is, on the other hand, much—yes, I must say this again—that will interest, astonish, and be good for you. You will see that fixed though his religious views are, the problems presented to him by this epoch of change we live in are to him as perplexing and real as they are to you and

me, and that his ears are as open as ours can be to the cry that is rising around us for some new moral revelation. Of course, the Church is always, according to his view, the same ; but the world is always changing, and its needs are always changing, and there is always in this way something new for the Church to discover. "The Catholic Church," he once said to me, "is the Columbus of modern society who will guide us eventually to the new moral continent which other explorers are trying to reach in vain."

'However, there is no occasion for me to go on describing him. When you come here, you will be able to judge of him for yourself. He was the first person to whom I spoke about my projected society, and he is the person who has best understood my idea and most fully sympathized with it. He approves thoroughly of my rules, even my moral ones, and especially those relating



to our social qualifications and fastidiousness.

‘ I tell you all this because I have some hope it may interest you. But do not alarm yourself with the thought that when you arrive next Thursday you will find the society in conclave, and be asked to take part in its deliberations. My society, as I tell you, is as yet not even formed ; it possibly never will be. Our party here will be nothing but an ordinary meeting of friends ; I venture to hope, a pleasant one.

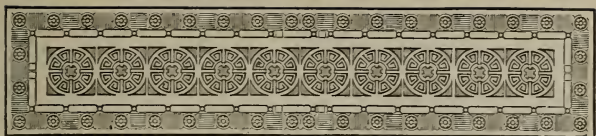
‘ I have one other scheme—I might almost say plot—in my head, with regard to one other person ; but it is so daring and requires so much resolution to bring about, that I must tantalize you for the present by observing a discreet silence about it. If it comes to anything, you will find it out quite soon enough. Meanwhile, it may amuse you to puzzle over it.

‘I wait for Thursday with impatience. I am longing to show the château to you. Good-night. The clock in the tower, which is striking half-past eleven, was given to a Courbon-Loubet by Henri Quatre.’



## BOOK II.





## CHAPTER I.



THE inland district which lies between Nice and Cannes can be reached by carriage with perfect ease from either place ; but to the average visitor who frequents these towns in the winter, it is a district practically as strange and as far off as Siberia. Of course, from the railway he has general hasty views of it. He is familiar enough with the shapes of its distant mountains, and the white and sparkling dots which he knows must be mountain villages. He is aware also of the vast intervening landscape ; and he constantly looks towards its soft, bewildering

ranges, expecting them to yield to the atmosphere some new surprise of colour. But of these ranges as objects of local knowledge, with a local civilization lurking in their folded hollows, he thinks no more than he does of the clouds that surround a sunset. He never asks why this variety of colour visits them—why some are a pearly grey, and why others are fledged with purple. He never dreams that here are fields of violets, and here terraced vineyards, and here romantic regions of unconjectured pine-forests. Still less does he dream of the people by whom the district is inhabited; of the embattled ramparts that their villages are still surrounded by; of the streets and fountains that have been unchanged for centuries; of the vaulted smithies, the old echoing drinking-shops, which are the same as they were in the days of the seigneurs; of the feudal mills and farm-houses, still used and tenanted; and of the roofless

castles that on many a hidden eminence still rear their towers, with hardly a sign of ruin.

Certainly these sights and scenes were entirely new to Mrs. Harley, as with two companions—her husband and another lady—she was passing through them on her journey to Courbon-Loubet, in a huge old-fashioned travelling carriage which Carew had sent for them. For the first half-hour or so they had rumbled through the suburbs of Nice. The express from Paris had been sweeping by with its sleeping-cars, and the walls on each side of the road were red and blue with advertisements. An hour later, and the stamping horses were dragging them over rough mediæval paving-stones, through a street where the newest and gaudiest-looking house had been last re-decorated before the First Revolution ; where the old women sat at their doors spinning, with hats like those of witches and with distaffs worthy of the Fates ; where



brown shy faces peered at them through grated windows, or from under mysterious arches, out of wells of darkness ; and where every head, as the carriage passed, was raised and bent with a mixture of grave respect and of frankness. All seemed to belong to an epoch not the present, from the fantastic beggar with his fur cap held out to them, to the old coachman, gaudy in faded livery, and the arms and coronet repeated on every panel.

‘In fact,’ said Mrs. Harley, when they were once more in the country, and were entering a road that led through a wild pine-forest, ‘Mr. Carew was perfectly right in telling us that a visit to him would be an excursion into the last century. Of course,’ she added, ‘he can know nothing except the surface of things —no more do we. But so far as the surface goes, I must say the illusion is perfect. It’s quite as good as a scene at a first-rate theatre.’

Presently there was visible through a sudden opening of the trees a far-off village perched on the side of an Alpine precipice ; and the coachman, gathering from their exclamations what it was that had attracted them, turned round and said in a grave whisper, that it was a village of bad repute, and that all the women in it were sorceresses.

‘ Better and better still,’ exclaimed Harley in high good humour. ‘ Let us hope, however, that the Republic does not burn them. Look, what a forest this is ! It covers the whole ridge, and here we are about to toil to the top of it. The very place for the witches to have a midnight picnic with the Devil in ! I shouldn’t wonder if it were the beginning of the domain of Courbon-Loubet ; and I am every moment expecting to catch some glimpse of the château frowning down at us over these savage pine-trees.’

They all looked about them with a growing sense of excitement, prepared to be startled at every fresh opening with a vision of roofs and turrets. They were, however, doomed to be disappointed. Time went on ; the forest was left behind them ; and not a sign of a château was to be seen anywhere. Harley suggested that they should make an inquiry of the coachman. The two ladies, however, would by no means assent to this. It would be, they said, like looking at the end of a novel ; and whatever the end might prove in the present case, they wished their uncertainty to be kept up to the last.

Meanwhile, they were descending the hill on the other side, into a richer but far tamer region. In place of the wild pine-forest there were soft groves of olives, and below were winding meadows kept green by sparkling watercourses. Here they would pass a field of as yet bloomless roses ; here another that

was mottled with purple violets, and made all the air fragrant. Presently tufted palms began to be not infrequent ; an occasional row of geraniums made a rude hedge along the roadside ; and in another moment they were in a land of orange-trees, that reminded them too strongly of the well-known suburbs of Nice. They could trace for some distance the course of the road ahead of them. They could see how it wound round the base of a wooded knoll ; how it passed an antique oil-mill, roofed with rugged tiles ; how it mounted a stone bridge with quaint irregular arches, and then lay like a ribbon between a curving line of poplars.

There was something in the whole scene eminently warm and southern—too much so, indeed, to entirely please the travellers.

‘I declare,’ said Mrs. Harley, ‘we have been taken in after all. This is like Italy far more than feudal France. It is a country for

villas, not a country for castles. See!’ she went on, when they had proceeded somewhat farther, and were skirting a hill crowded with luxuriant foliage, ‘the very forests here are like gardens more than forests! Look at these trees, George: neat to the very skyline!’

But before Harley could make any response to his wife, they were both startled by a sudden exclamation from their companion. ‘Look!’ she said, ‘look—not at the trees, but above them! What is that brown thing rising up in the air there?’

They looked, and sure enough they perceived the object in question. It was tall and straight, but otherwise of uncertain figure; and at first, except for its singularity, conveyed no impression to anyone. In another moment, however, Harley had solved the enigma. ‘It is the five-sided tower,’ he said, ‘of the Château de Courbon-Loubet, and the

seigneur's flag, as large as life, on the top of it.'

He was still speaking when the carriage turned sharply round, and, meeting a side road, which had not till then been visible, paused presently before some rusty iron gates. They were gates adorned with twisted ciphers and coronets, and were hung on two stately but now crumbling pillars. At one side was a lodge, with a defaced cipher upon it also; and opposite this, and looking equally uncared for, was a gaunt wooden crucifix, its base covered with brambles. A whistle from the coachman brought out an old tottering man, scrambling into a coat that had been once part of a livery. He raised his hat with an almost religious reverence; the gates were opened, and the carriage plunged forward. The travellers found themselves entering a long shadowy carriage-drive, which wound gradually upwards round the sides of the

wooded hill. Above and below them were banks of mossy turf, and here and there a small lawny opening; but whichever direction the eye took the view was bounded by a network of trees or shrubs. The approach seemed endless, as they still kept mounting higher; and nothing more had as yet been seen of the château. By-and-by, however, the forest trees became fewer, and the shrubs larger and more closely massed together, the sunlight fell on the golden globes of oranges, and walls of clipt myrtle, tier above tier, were discernible. At last, rising bright over one of these green ramparts, Mrs. Harley's eyes caught sight of a fountain of white camellia blossoms; and at the same time a wall with a succession of low towers was seen through the screen of leaves to be beetling directly over them. A moment later every screen had vanished; they had emerged on an open platform, from which, for miles and miles,



they could see the country like a luminous map below them—village and mountain, gardens, fields, and vineyards, and farther away still the shining hyacinth of the sea. But the revelation was instantaneous only. They had hardly had time to realize it when it was again hidden from them, and they were passing in darkness under the arch of a sombre gateway. Then the hoofs of the horses stamped on a wooden drawbridge ; the carriage again swept out into the daylight ; and now, for the first time, with all its details distinct to them, before their eyes was the Château de Courbon-Loubet.

It was a large building, in shape an irregular square, with the tower which they had seen already standing at one end of it, and here and there a turret, of the same height as the walls, breaking their monotonous surface with a bulging semicircle. It was certainly different from what the party had pictured to

themselves. Architecturally it had no beautiful feature. The many windows, disposed at uneven heights, were mere square apertures, and were flanked with Venetian shutters; and the pile, from roof to basement, was covered with dingy stucco. But in spite of this, it had an air of dejected dignity; the stucco itself must have been more than a century old, and have expressed the taste of a man who wore a periwig; whilst here and there, where a piece chanced to have fallen, a glimpse could be caught of the mediæval masonry. The arched entrance at which the carriage drew up presented several sights that were even more pleasing to the imagination. Amongst them was an enormous scutcheon and coronet, which had been only so much damaged by the popular zeal of the Revolutionists as to give to its survival an air of tranquil defiance. But other things struck the travellers, of equal or even greater interest.

Two carriages, very much like their own, only older, dustier, and under the charge of postillions, were being emptied of portmanteaus and boxes by a mixed group of domestics, mostly French, but with a few maids and footmen unmistakably English amongst them.

‘Here’s grandeur!’ said Mrs. Harley. ‘Maids, cockades, footmen, and gentlemen’s gentlemen! We little knew what our friend was letting us in for.’

The carriage had stopped just as she was in the act of speaking, and Harley’s valet, directed by the coachman, had already tugged at a dangling iron bell-pull, and elicited a clang that would have done honour to Westminster Abbey. But its summons was hardly necessary. A liveried *concierge*, gaudy and faded as the coachman, with armorial buttons as big as a five-franc piece, was already descending the steps, slow with age and dignity, and was receiving the arrivals as if

they had been all of the blood royal. Meanwhile, at a moment's notice, he had been reinforced by a tribe of other retainers—odd-looking footmen whose clothes were a trifle smarter, and a brisk butler with a grin of delighted welcome, who, to judge by his looks, had probably come from Paris, and alone of all his surroundings suggested the civilization of to-day.

Under his guidance the party passed through the archway, and found themselves in an open court which occupied the centre of the building, and which, to their surprise, they found was alive with people. Here the impression that they had dived into another age became, if possible, more complete than ever. There were many more traces of early architectural detail. Over every door was some shield or monogram; there was a curious well in the middle, railed round with ironwork. But it was the human element that contributed to

the effect most. Close to the well were loitering several green-coated *chasseurs*, with their guns slung over their shoulders and their powder-horns at their sides ; whilst slowly moving past them a body of swarthy peasants were pushing a rude truck, with the carcass of a wild boar in it, towards a smoky door which suggested the regions of the kitchen. To crown all, high overhead the great flag was fluttering on the top of the tall tower, and Mrs. Harley, for a moment looking up at it, was startled to see that it bore on it no private *blazon*, but that it was neither more nor less than the royal banner of France. Presently there was observed a general slight commotion; there was a touching of hats, men were moving aside, and Carew the next instant was advancing to meet his visitors.

‘ The others,’ he said to Mrs. Harley, as he was escorting them into the house, ‘ have not arrived yet, but will be here before dinner,

and their luggage has come before them. And so you have actually been able to bring your companion with you! You may imagine my pleasure when I got your note this morning.'

Their arrival was well-timed. The warmth and the brilliance of the afternoon was ending just as they had driven up to the château; and by the time they had got rid of the dust of travel, and had met in a small saloon round a quaint cluster of tea-cups, the west had begun to flush with the first colours of the sunset. They were full of the glimpses they had already had of the interior—the narrow crooked corridors, pale with Italian frescoes; the wide oak staircase, hung with dingy portraits; the size of their bedrooms, and the stately canopies of their beds; whilst the white-and-gold wainscot which now surrounded them would have made the heart of a Bond Street decorator flutter.

‘I have,’ said Mrs. Harley, ‘already remarked during our drive here that our whole adventures to-day seem exactly like a scene out of a play; and the boar in the courtyard and the royal flag on the tower—they, Mr. Carew, make the impression almost complete. Nothing is wanting now but a chorus of virtuous peasants to dance on the green—if you have a green—by moonlight.’

‘Well,’ said Carew, smiling, and yet with an air of gravity, ‘I shouldn’t be surprised if we did manage something of that kind.’

His manner was such as to make Mrs. Harley stare at him. ‘My dear Mr. Carew,’ she said, ‘what *have* you been getting up to amuse us?’

‘Perhaps,’ said Carew presently, after a little more catechizing, ‘I had better tell you at once what is in the wind for this evening. To-day is the birthday of a certain distinguished personage, who would, if he had his



rights, be now on the throne of France ; and my cousin, Gaston de Courbon-Loubet, whether he has been here or not, has always had the day kept as a *fête* at the château. After to-night our party will be only a small one; but, for to-night, a few people are coming over from Cannes, and in Gaston's place we must do our best to entertain them.'

'Who are they ?' said Mrs. Harley. 'Please let us know whom we are to meet.'

'Our own party, as I call it,' said Carew, 'consists of Frederic Stanley; of Lady Chislehurst, who will arrive to-morrow ; of Lord Aiden, who arrives this evening—he ought to be here now——'

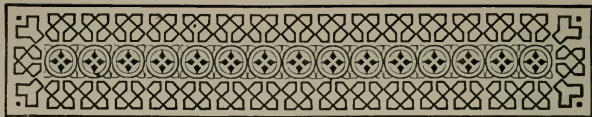
'Hark!' interposed Harley ; 'did not you hear a bell ?'

'I did,' said his wife ; 'it is certainly some one coming.' And she begged Carew, both for herself and her young companion, that they might make their escape upstairs to rest

t themselves, before the appearance of any fresh arrivals.

Seated at her window, in an old brocaded chair, with a faint smell of antiquity breathing from the hangings close to her, Mrs. Harley leaned on her hand reflectively, and watched the change outside that was stealing over the wide landscape. The sun had already sunk ; the twilight had lost its clearness ; colour after colour was fading from cloud and mountain ; and presently all was grey but one long tract of primrose, and the far off Esterels cutting it with their peaks of violet.





## CHAPTER II.



HERE are few moments, during a visit to a country house, of such general interest to the whole party assembled as the first meeting before the first dinner ; and in the present case, to Mrs. Harley at least, this interest was even keener than usual. All the conditions were so much out of the common, she was in a pleasing uncertainty as to what to expect next ; and whilst she was dressing, the passage outside was constantly creaking with the hurry of unknown footsteps. Everything, indeed, was suggestive of coming surprise.

Her first surprise was the room in which the meeting took place. Mrs. Harley, on entering it, found herself in such a blaze of candle-light, glittering everywhere from chandeliers and sconces, that her dazzled eyes could hardly realize where she was ; but when she recovered herself, the first impression produced on her was that she had been suddenly transported into some antique Italian palace. The mosaic floor, the gorgeous painted ceiling, on which Phaeton was seen in the act of falling from his chariot, the damask walls, and the heavy gilded furniture, all suggested Genoa of two centuries back. It was indeed the work of a renowned Genoese artist, and in old times it was celebrated as one of the wonders of Provence.

What struck the Harleys, however, both wife and husband too, was not the room only, but the company that was already assembled there. There were a number of ladies, cer-

tainly not English, some of whom—one in particular—glittered with pearls and diamonds, whilst those others who were anything less than splendid were almost more imposing by their semi-religious dowdiness. There were men, as certainly not English, also, amongst whom were a couple of rosy priests, and several pairs of languid eyes and moustaches, the vision of which made Harley's insular mind at once frame to itself the ungenerous word 'Puppies!'

He and his wife were receiving this general but confused impression, when Carew came forward to meet them, and a distinguished-looking man with a star and a blue ribbon along with him. The latter, to judge by appearances, was probably about eight-and-forty; but appearances in his case were, in one way, oddly ambiguous. His thoughtful and piercing eyes were at once alert and dreamy; his dress suggested at once fashion and negligence; and altogether he produced a mixed impression, as

of a younger man than he was, with the burdens of one far older.

He greeted the Harleys in an almost caressing manner, and Mrs. Harley had just begun a sentence, 'My dear Lord Aiden——' when she was aware that someone had slowly approached the group—another man, of a very different character — and that Carew was waiting to introduce him. A glance at his face was enough to show that he was a cleric; a glance at his dress enough to show that he was a Catholic priest. But his type was very different from that of the two French *abbés*; and Mrs. Harley, even before his name was mentioned, felt sure that she was in the presence of Mr. Stanley.

'And now,' said Carew presently, 'you must know some of the others.' He hastily pointed out to her several French ladies of distinction—ornaments of the Faubourg Saint Germain; and one princess—the most gor-

geous person present, who had reigned as a beauty under the Second Empire. He then added a word or two with respect to the men; and in another moment she and her husband also were being made acquainted with various *viscomtes* and *duchesses*, whose family titles, if not their personal names, are part of the history and part of the fame of France. Presently Mrs. Harley, amongst the murmur of strange voices, heard herself being addressed, with an air of command, in English. Turning round, she was conscious of the light tap of a fan; and there, with a cold shoulder given to the Princess and her diamonds, and a smile almost of deference to a lady in black next her, herself even blacker and dowdier, was sitting Lady Mangotsfield. There she was, the greatest of great ladies, the finest specimen of the fossil Tory in existence, whose political principles had been so firmly fixed in her childhood, that they were the one



thing in England which time had been unable to change, and were still just what they had been before the first Reform Bill.

Mrs. Harley, no doubt, was a little bit afraid of her ; and, thinking her in London, was taken aback at seeing her. When, therefore, a greeting had passed between them, she was somewhat relieved at being again addressed by Carew, who began to speak to her in a low tone of voice. ‘ Everyone is here,’ he said—‘ everyone but your *protégée*.’

‘ To be sure,’ said Mrs. Harley. ‘ It’s the very thing I was thinking of. Had I known there would have been all these people, I would have waited and come down with her. She’s a bit late, for she has only my maid to dress her. If you will allow me, I will go up and fetch her.’

Carew assented, and she was preparing to do so when, turning towards the door,

she saw that it was opening ; and a moment after, in an exquisite white dress, a bunch of scarlet berries at her breast, and another cluster of them in her hair, tugging a little impatiently at one long *gant de Suède*, and a little embarrassed with the other glove and her fan, Mrs. Harley's *protégée* entered—Miss Consuelo Burton.

The eyes of the younger Frenchmen were in an instant fixed on her ; an old and portly *duc* raised his eyeglass with interest ; and Lord Aiden, laying his hand on Carew's shoulder, gently murmured, ' My dear fellow, who is this beautiful creature ? '

' She is the person,' said Carew, ' who will be one of your neighbours at dinner. You will have to take in the old Duchesse de — ; and ask her to show you the locket she has on, with the most beautiful picture imaginable of Marie Antoinette in it.'

He had hardly done speaking before the

announcement was made to him—the solemn announcement—that Monsieur's dinner was served. Two tapestry curtains at the end of the room parted ; two gilded doors were slowly flung open ; another constellation of lights was seen shining beyond ; and to this the company, between two lines of domestics, were presently moving—a stately and bright procession.

‘Magnificent! splendid!’ murmured Lord Aiden dreamily, as his eyes wandered over the plate and china on the table. ‘This is altogether a wreck saved from the past. Those dishes are all of the finest Sèvres.’

‘Yes,’ said the old *duchesse* next him. ‘And there's hardly a thing here which has not some history—you may be perfectly sure of that. The Courbon-Loubets once were one of the greatest houses in France ; and amongst the old houses they are still one of the richest.’

Soon, however, their attention was taken from plate and china by a sound of political discussion, which had sprung up round the table. The politics discussed, for the most part, were French, not English ; and this was perhaps natural ; for not only amongst the company were the French in a large majority, but whilst England was on the eve of an election, France was actually in the middle of one ; and strong hopes were entertained all over the country that the world was about to witness in it a Conservative and a Royalist reaction.

‘I think I should die happy,’ said Carew, towards the end of dinner, ‘if I could see the time when the Parisian gravers would once more, in humility, be dedicating their engravings “to the King.”’ His nearest neighbour smiled, and received this speech with sympathy ; and Carew, having turned for a moment to whisper something to a servant, added,

‘ And I should die even happier if I could know that Paris had once more a Bastille.’

‘ And we,’ said an old *marquis*, with a look in his worn face half of melancholy, half of past dissipation, ‘ should have something fit to live for if we had only a king to die for.’

Carew glanced from him to one or two of the younger dandies, with a feeling, if not an expression, of something like contempt. Then he cast a hasty look behind him, as if to see whether some order was being executed.

The old *marquis*, who had been intently watching him, seemed to divine his thoughts, and said, with a glance at the younger dandies also, ‘ They, too, would die, as their fathers died before them.’

At that instant the conversation stopped suddenly, and all the company started. Suddenly the room had been filled with a burst of orchestral music ; and it was then perceived

that at one end of it was a musicians' gallery, almost lost in the shadow, and that now this was occupied by a band, and glimmering with shaded lights. By the time the surprise of the sound and the discovery had subsided, the company found they were listening to an air which, for them at least, was charged beyond all others with meaning, with hope, with memories. It was 'Oh, Richard, oh, mon Roi, l'univers t'abandonne ;' and for a moment it almost seemed to them that the dining-room of Courbon-Loubet had become transformed into the memorable Hall of the Opera.

Other airs followed, various and more lively ; and the excellence of the performers having attracted general comment, Carew informed his friends that he had had them over from Nice, and that one or two of them had been members of the orchestra at Monte Carlo.

At last the time came when the company rose ; and the ladies and gentlemen, following the French fashion, left the room together. The drawing-room presented a scene not more brilliant, but more animated, than it had done before dinner. Lady Mangotsfield was enthroned on a comfortless Louis Quinze sofa, with a Legitimist *duc* on one side, and a Legitimist *duchesse* on the other ; and the three were quietly rejoicing in the complete concord of their prejudices. Lady Mangotsfield differed from her friends upon two points only. She could never forgive the society of some sixty years back in Vienna for presuming to think that Lady S—— V—— was not a suitable match for Prince E—— or for any man ; and also the Pope and all his works were things she could not abide. The first sore point, however, there was now no call to touch upon ; and as to the second, in spite of her sound Protestantism, though



fasting and the Mass did little good to the soul, she considered them as excellent protests against Republican principles.

Meanwhile, from the younger Frenchmen Miss Consuelo Burton was receiving a great deal of attention—in especial from one, who was a great admirer of England, and whose English, if not so correct, was as fluent and as impertinent as his French. There were two people who were not quite pleased at this spectacle. One was the Princess ; but she was partially consoled by Lord Aiden, with whom she discussed many curious scenes at the Tuileries. The other was Carew, who had no consolation of that kind, but before long found one, when, on receiving a message from a servant, he begged the company to come all of them to the windows ; or, if they were not afraid of the air, to go outside on to the ramparts. There was at once a general movement, and a general sense of

expectation. The elderly ladies presently had all of them their faces at the panes ; the others, the night being mild, were already in the open air, and Carew, through the exercise of a little social diplomacy, contrived to find himself close to Mrs. Harley and Miss Consuelo Burton.

The ramparts on which they were standing commanded a deep valley, with the huddling roofs of the village almost directly under them, and on the opposite side a succession of wooded hills. In a moment or two Mrs. Harley became aware of a noise like that of a crowd hoarsely murmuring somewhere ; and looking over the parapet, she saw that some fifty feet below her was an open space, completely filled with people.

‘ You see,’ said Carew, ‘ there are our virtuous peasants—the one thing which, according to you, was wanting.’

A cry of surprise here broke from everyone. There sounded through the night the clear notes of a bugle, and suddenly, from point after point on the hills opposite, and again from the brushwood deep down in the valley, there burst forth a succession of coloured fires—blue, green, purple, gold, and crimson—growing, tremulously fading, and then again growing, palpitating like enchanted glow-worms. They burnt for a minute or two, and then showed signs of dying; but before they were out the horn again sounded, and high into the air, with its long trail, sang a rocket, and then broke noiselessly into a falling flock of stars. Another followed, and another, in brisk succession. Then a glow was perceived in a different quarter, and, at various spots on the ground below and opposite, cascades and wheels of fire began to revolve and glitter. These, though pretty enough, were in themselves not out

of the common ; but when at last they had come to an end, and there had been a dull interval of a moment or two, fresh sparks simultaneously were struck in a number of places, and, the second after, the whole of the sloping woodland became a glittering garden of white and quivering *fleurs-de-lys*. A shout rose from the whole assembly below, which was echoed in milder tones by those above them on the ramparts. The royal flowers remained for some time bright and steadfast ; then at last they too became visibly fainter. But they were not yet out, or at least only a few of them, when a central glow, brighter than any of its predecessors, gathered to itself the whole attention of everybody. Its shape and meaning were for a few seconds uncertain. Then, clear and shining in each minutest detail, there burst on the spectators the likeness of a colossal crown. It remained for a second only—only long

enough to be distinguished by them—and then, as it faded, up from the very same spot a bouquet of rockets rose, so brilliant and numerous that the whole prospect was nothing but a vision of soaring fire. Then that too subsided ; the dark sky had its own again ; the shouts of the villagers hoarsely sank into silence, and the party on the ramparts returned regretfully to the drawing-room.

Regret, however, was almost directly banished. One distraction had ended only to make room for another. A pair of folding-doors were already standing open, giving access to a small saloon beyond ; and Carew was already leading the way into it. Some of the younger men had instant visions of dancing ; but very few moments sufficed to dispel these. The saloon, which in shape was circular, was not only small, but was more than half filled with a number of gilded chairs ; and without delay or question the docile

company seated themselves. They then perceived that facing them was a rich but faded curtain of pale blue brocade, festooned gracefully with tarnished gold tassels ; and they were hardly settled into the first stage of expectancy, when a lively strain of music broke from an unseen orchestra ; two footmen went round distributing programmes, and the curtain presently rose, disclosing a small stage, on which a *troupe* of really excellent artistes, from Nice, gave a representation of Molière's *Bourgeois Gentilhomme*.

Everyone present had a delightful sense of the malicious applicability of the play to our own times, and the actors met with an applause even beyond what they themselves could account for. After the performance, some of the spectators mounted on the stage out of curiosity. Amongst the last to do so was Miss Consuelo Burton, and she still chanced to be standing there after the others

had descended. The footlights shone on her delicate white dress and her bunches of scarlet berries. She made, as she stood there, with her dark eyes glittering, a beautiful but unconscious picture. Almost immediately the young Frenchman, who had been so voluble and attentive to her before, joined her at one bound, and, placing himself beside her, called out to Carew, 'Come, let us have some *tableaux*. Mademoiselle Burton shall be the Maid of Orleans, and the *Princesse*, Agnes Sorel.' Miss Consuelo Burton at first turned and stared at him with an expression of tranquil and yet half-contemptuous wonder; and then, with a smile just sufficient for civility, dropped her eyes, and quietly stepped down again amongst the spectators.

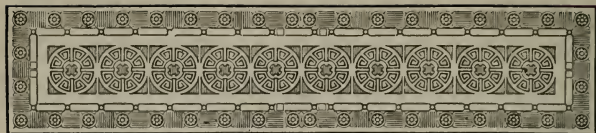
'Ah,' said the *Princesse*, with a clear metallic laugh to the Frenchman, 'you will not, *mon cher*, have any *tableaux* to-night.'

'We have seen,' said Lord Aiden, in a



murmur to Lady Mangotsfield, 'many interesting and many charming things; but Miss Consuelo Burton is the most charming and interesting of them all, and embodies as much as any of them the best of what the world is losing. There's enough high breeding in the mere way in which she carries her head to turn the blood of a whole Radical meeting into gall.'

'I don't,' said Lady Mangotsfield, 'think much of that young *vicomte*. His father was a gentleman, but his mother was a notary's daughter. Consuelo don't like him either. Of course one could see that; but she shows her dislike without any blushing or *gaucherie*.'



### CHAPTER III.



THE following morning, till close upon midday, quiet possessed the château, but about that time the bustle of life began again ; and by half-past twelve the whole of the distinguished company, from the youngest Frenchman to the oldest of the *abbés* and *duchesses*, with all the English party, except Lady Mangotsfield, were gathered together in a voluble circle round the breakfast-table. The French contingent had come for the night only, and were to start for Cannes betimes in the afternoon. Having celebrated last night their attachment to the Monarchical cause, to-night

they were most of them about to forget the Republic at a fancy ball given by a charming American. It was therefore important to them, to the younger men especially, that they should be back in time for a final inspection of their dresses ; and their carriages accordingly were to be ready for them as soon as breakfast was over.

At the last moment, however, Carew had a parting surprise for them. He and his English friends would accompany them half the way, and arrangements had been made for tea in a certain forest, at a beautiful spot which lay not far from the road. Secretly one or two were a little uneasy at the delay ; but on reaching the spot in question, they felt well repaid for their patience. Every preparation, they found, had been made already. In a green glade there was pitched a pretty pavilion, gaily fluttering with pink bows and ribands, and above it, moving on a lazily-

moving flag they once more beheld the royal lilies of France. The grass in front was spread with scarlet blankets ; a little fire made a blue smoke in the background ; cups of tea and chocolate were presently handed round, with cakes and sweetmeats piled up in wicker baskets. Nor was this all ; for three boy musicians—one fiddler, and two who performed on clarionets—emerged from behind the pavilion as soon as the company were seated, and played a succession of touching and simple airs with a sweetness and feeling that charmed even the most fastidious.

‘Watteau,’ said Mrs. Harley to Carew, when the French guests had departed, and the others, in a large wagonette, were on their way back to the château, ‘Watteau himself never painted a scene of more delightful and of more unreal simplicity. But it is impossible to tell you at once all I think of your entertainment. It must dribble out bit by bit.’

‘Well,’ said Carew, ‘you may speak your mind quite freely. The entertainment was not mine, it was really my cousin Gaston’s. He pays for it. He has something like it every year, only it happened that this time it fell to my lot to manage it. What brought me to Nice the other day, when I first met you, was something I had to settle with the actors and the firework man. However, it’s all finished now except the pleasantest part of it, and that is the talking it over amongst ourselves this evening.’

‘Nothing,’ said Lord Aiden, ‘is so depressing as to be left with oneself by one’s friends; nothing is so charming as to be left with one’s friends by one’s acquaintances.’

‘And,’ said Carew, ‘even to-night we shall not be without an excitement. Not only shall we see Lady Mangotsfield, who has been keeping in her room all day, but there is

to be another arrival, whom I hope you have not forgotten.'

'Who?' said Mrs. Harley.

'Surely,' said Carew, 'I told you. No less a person than Lady Chislehurst.'

At the mention of this name Mr. Stanley's eye lit up for an instant with a faint twinkle of humour. 'That,' he said, 'will indeed be a treat for all of us.' And his tone was one of sincerity, just touched with genial sarcasm.

Now Lady Chislehurst was nothing if not Catholic. Her zeal was a proverb; her name was international property; and Mrs. Harley, who had caught the priest's expression, felt him at once rise many degrees in her estimation. She herself, too, had been reminded of a treat awaiting her, which perhaps she regarded with a temper akin to his—the company of Lady Mangotsfield, and most likely a lecture from her. They had returned to the château, however, and were assembled for

dinner ; dinner at last was announced, and the dining-room door flung open ; yet neither Lady Mangotsfield nor Lady Chislehurst had put in an appearance. Mrs. Harley was conscious of two distinct sensations—one of relief, the other of disappointment ; when Carew, as he gave his arm to her, at once cured her of both. ‘Lady Mangotsfield,’ he said, ‘will not come down till afterwards, and Lady Chislehurst, who has only just arrived, sent a special message to beg that we would not wait for her.’

The table, in spite of the diminished size of the party, was, in the matter of plate and china, as remarkable as it had been yesterday.

‘What a magnificent fellow,’ said Harley, ‘Carew’s cousin is ! This château of his must be a complete museum.’

Lord Aiden, who again had been fascinated by the Sèvres china, looked up, and said with a look of dreamy wonder, ‘Do you



mean to say that he gives you *carte blanche* to use all this ?’

‘It is hard to tell you,’ said Carew, ‘where my *carte blanche* ends. Look at this table ; look at these lights, these servants ; think of the whole of this large house kept going. I pay for the food we eat certainly ; but everything else is done by my cousin Gaston ; and as for yesterday, Gaston paid for the food too—actors, dinner, fireworks, fiddlers, all. When I tell it you first it sounds just like a fairy-tale ; but the real history of it is this. Gaston is a widower, and is childless. He had two children once ; but they both died here of diphtheria, and since that time he has never revisited the place. But it is the oldest possession of his family. It is, moreover, one of the very few châteaux that were practically untouched by the Revolution. The old life has gone on without a break in it, and though he himself

may never again inhabit it, he means that the full household shall be still maintained to the last. He used to keep a white horse in the stables, on which he hoped that the King would one day ride into Paris. For four or five winters he has lent this house to his mother-in-law, but this year she is gone to Madeira, and knowing I was coming south, he was good enough to offer it to me.'

'But what do you mean,' said Mrs. Harley, 'by the household being maintained to the last? And what is this *last* which you speak of in so melancholy a manner?'

'The family,' said Carew, 'were so popular in this neighbourhood that during the Revolution their house was hardly injured; but that which escaped the violence of the Revolution will perish in the next generation under the blight of the *Code Napoléon*. The estate will be divided, and this place will be sold.'

‘ Mr. Carew, I am so glad that you did not wait for me ! ’ The voice that uttered the words was like a clear ripple of music, with a rustle of silk for a soft but rapid accompaniment ; and all were at once aware of the advent of Lady Chislehurst. Her handsome face wore its most benignant of smiles ; the very sound of her dress seemed somehow an ecclesiastical benediction, and her eyes were like the sun : they shone on the just and unjust. She called Miss Consuelo ‘ her darling ’ ; she asked her how were Elfrida and Mildred ; and, taking the seat left for her by the side of Mr. Stanley, slipped into his hand a letter, which, she said, she had been keeping to show him. ‘ I want you,’ she murmured, ‘ to see there the account of the Holy Father.’ Then with a brisker and more mundane accent, ‘ I knew,’ she said, ‘ I should be late ; and it turns out that I am even later than I thought I should be. The

fact is, Mr. Carew, I found out that you have a chapel here, and there has been no Mass said in it for over seven years. You must allow me to-morrow to do something to the altar ; and, if it can be managed, to have my Mass there on Sunday. Mr. Stanley and I will talk about that—won't we? '

Carew could not help glancing across the table to Miss Consuelo, and she acknowledged a community of thought by a little momentary *moue*. The Church, however, having had its share of attention, Lady Chislehurst now turned to the world ; and no one certainly gave to general conversation an easier flow or a more varied interest than she. She had thought much, she had read much, she had seen much of life. She had sought and she had made, the acquaintance of nearly everyone, to whom she saw any chance of being either a friend or benefactress, and she thus had a wide experience of all ranks except the middle.

The gossip of Mayfair and the wants of the crowded alley—she thought most of the last, but she was equally familiar with both. If she could be said in society to have any fault at all, it was a slight tendency to group her ideas round one out of two centres—herself or the Catholic Church. She had had adventures in every quarter of the globe. She had had them at Brixton, she had had them in the tropics ; but whatever happened, there was always sure to be someone, some voice which exclaimed from a three-pair back or an earthquake, ‘ Oh, Lady Chislehurst, my lady, can that be you!’ And yet, if she sometimes irritated as well as amused her friends, she could say of them truly what can be said truly by few : none of them whenever she was present could bring themselves to desire her absence.

Certainly to-night at dinner no one was even tempted to do so—not even Mrs. Harley,

though her back did go up for a moment, when she heard what to her was a respectable but indifferent superstition talked of as 'The Faith,' without a single word of apology. That, however, went for nothing ; and putting that aside, there was but one other jar on the religious feelings of anybody ; and this was experienced by Lady Chislehurst herself. It, too, was slight, and it was occasioned merely by the thought that in the drawing-room she was presently to encounter Lady Mangotsfield. As a great lady, Lady Mangotsfield commanded her highest opinion ; but Lady Mangotsfield was the most unbending of Protestants, and her embodiment of pure Christianity was a Prince Bishop of Durham. Lady Chislehurst, however, was not in a mood to be ruffled. Two words were enough to express and relieve her feelings. Smiling her sweetest, she whispered to Mr. Stanley, ' Old cat ! ' and she then went on eating her dinner,

prepared for, and resigned to, the situation.

She had every reason to be in a good humour ; for she at once gave to the party a life that before was wanting. She was beset with questions as to public feeling at home, the preparations for the impending elections, and the prospects of the various candidates. She had only left England five or six days ago, so she had much to say that was not by this time old. The week before last she had been in the East End of London, and had found herself in the middle of a mob of Social Democrats. They had just been listening, she said, to one of their newest leaders—a soured unsuccessful man, once an officer in the army, who had been suggesting, amongst shouts of applause, as the most useful measure for themselves, that they should cut the throats of everyone who was rich enough to pay income-tax. What would have happened to her she



was quite unable to tell, if three men, each of whom she had tended during an illness, had not suddenly appeared, and secured an escape for her carriage. On the evening of the same day she had dined with the Liberal Prime Minister, who, though aware of misery as a permanent factor in politics, had not been informed that at the present moment it had any detailed existence anywhere out of Ireland. A day or two later she had been in one of the Midland counties, canvassing rural voters on behalf of her Tory nephew; and the last few days she had devoted to going to church from the most dignified mansion in the whole Faubourg Saint Germain.

This last piece of news at once turned the conversation to the previous night's festivities, and all that Lady Chislehurst had lost. Lady Chislehurst already knew she had lost something; but she had not realized how much till now. On hearing the names of the

French ladies who had been present, she found that she had known all the eldest ones from her infancy. It even appeared she had received presents from all of them, beginning with a rattle and ending with a book of devotions. Then Lord Aiden, in a tone of indolent despondency, returned to the subject they had been speaking of when Lady Chislehurst entered, and informed her of the fate that was hanging over the château. 'You see,' he said, 'what it is that France is coming to.'

Lady Chislehurst's mind was sufficiently full of forebodings to make her listen to this with an almost emulous sadness. 'Yes,' she said, 'and it is just the same in England. The châteaux there have the same future before them. No, Mrs. Harley, I assure you you need not laugh. One could hardly have imagined, till the approach of the election has showed it, how far the influence of the country gentlemen has declined. In my nephew's

county—the place I have just been in—who should you think the Liberal candidates are? An architect is one, if you please ; and some nobody from the Stock Exchange is another. I have not seen either of them ; but one can quite imagine the sort of thing—men whose public programme is to abolish the Lords, and whose private programme is to dine with them.’

Mrs. Harley, with a face half sad and half smiling, said : ‘ As for the châteaux, I fear that their days are numbered.’

Carew was determined that nothing should go without a fight for it, and Lord Aiden wondered whether anything were left worth fighting for.

Harley, who was by far the most cheerful person present, believed that of existing institutions two at least would be permanent. These were the institutions of property and marriage. Everything else, he thought, was rapidly decomposing. ‘ Still,’ he added, ad-

dressing himself to Lord Aiden, 'the territorial classes might last a good bit longer, if they would only wake up a bit and appeal more to the people.'

'Yes,' Lord Aiden replied, 'and a weary work that would be.'

'My dear Lord Aiden,' said Lady Chislehurst winningly, 'there's only one thing can save us, and that is the Church. I sometimes think that the Church is the only thing that will be saved. Mr. Stanley, tell me, do you agree with me?'

Mr. Stanley looked gravely at her. 'Any institution may be saved,' he said, 'which has not lost the power of adapting itself.'

'And yet,' said Harley, casting his eyes about him, 'what could adapt itself better than this château to all the demands of our simple modern luxury? And all the same, you tell us that we shall not save this château.'

'Let us hope,' said Lady Chislehurst, 'if

it must go out of the family, that it will be bought as it stands by someone who will take care of it.'

'It could be bought as it stands,' said Carew, 'by no one except a millionaire. Indeed, I am not sure that I would not sooner think of it as a ruin than as furbished up and inhabited by some rich Radical *bourgeois*.'

'That,' said Mrs. Harley, 'is a sentiment worthy of Lady Mangotsfield.'

'Lady Mangotsfield,' said Carew, evading this piece of the criticism, 'at all events is perfectly happy. She is having her dinner in a room that was occupied by Charles the Fifth, and her bed which, in grandeur, is quite as good as a throne, has been aired for her by Francis the First, who slept, I am told, three weeks in it.'

'And so,' said Lord Aiden, presently, 'a few years more, a very few years, and our present surroundings will be all a dream of

the past—everything scattered to the four winds of heaven. Well, this château is only an illustration of what we have just been saying. It is very much like the world in which we have been brought up from our childhood—our world, I mean—the world of us who are here now. It is not gone ; but it is going : as,’ he added with a laugh, ‘ the auctioneer will be saying about this beautiful china some day.’

‘ Our world,’ said Carew, ‘ will, you think, be knocked down as this china will. It may be knocked down, but it will be handed over to nobody.’

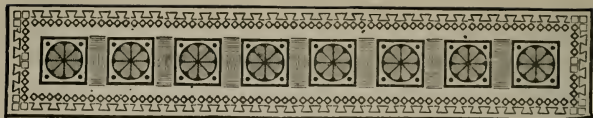
He had hardly done speaking when a grave and majestic footman, his hair snowy with powder, who had not waited at dinner, approached Carew deferentially, and murmured a few words to him. Carew turned to his guests, and, smiling, explained the message.

‘ Lady Mangotsfield,’ he said, ‘ has just

come down. Let us keep up our French habits, and all of us go in to her together.' During the general movement, for a second or two Miss Consuelo Burton was next to him. 'I am glad,' he said to her, 'that you have again got your red berries on. I picked them myself, both yesterday and again this evening, and I gave orders that they should be taken to your room. You wore berries like that—perhaps you may not remember it—the last evening I ever saw you in London.'







## CHAPTER IV.



O a hasty glance that had not learned to discriminate, Lady Mangotsfield might have passed for the meekest of living women. The party from the dining-room found her smiling placidly in the hardest and uneasiest of all the chairs available. Her black silk dress, which was the same she had worn last night, was dowdy and put on with negligence ; what shape it had was obscured by a yet dower shawl ; and her long hands, crossed on her lap before her, were covered with wrinkled gloves that had only been half drawn on. But the real meaning

of her toilette was the very reverse of what it seemed to be. It expressed not her estimate of herself as compared with the world at large, but her estimate of the world at large as compared with her : and the placid smile, when studied a little longer, seemed less that of a person disposed to notice everybody, than of one who had been accustomed only to people fit to be noticed.

With the present company she was luckily quite satisfied—even with Mr. Stanley, having found out who was his father. In a general way too, it appeared, she had been pleased with the party of last night ; and she began almost directly to make Carew a number of pretty speeches about the way in which he had managed the entertainment.

‘I had often heard,’ she said, ‘from old Madame de Courbon-Loubet, of all the fine doings which your cousin still kept up here ; and so when I learnt it was you who were

at the château this winter—and I only learnt it by the merest accident from a stranger—I sent you a note at once and said I was coming to see you. I've been writing this morning to your poor dear Uncle Horace, telling him all about it. He gets out very little ; and any bit of news amuses him. By the way,' she added, 'you made one mistake, you shouldn't have invited that woman—I always forget her name——'

'Who?' said Carew, though he knew quite well what was coming.

'That woman with all the diamonds—that princess—that banker's daughter. It don't do. She don't mix with the others.'

'I know,' said Carew, 'that they don't exactly like her ; but at least they visit her ; and I couldn't avoid asking her. Besides, our party was to celebrate a Royal birthday, and who has been admired by so many Royalties as she?'

‘Yes,’ said Lady Mangotsfield, with an odd little low laugh; ‘the Royalties can do what they like. That’s just what we can’t.’ Then somewhat abruptly turning to Mrs. Harley, ‘Well, my dear,’ she went on, ‘and what have you been about lately? Last night I had hardly a moment to talk to you. Have you been having any more of those dreadful men of genius to your parties?’

Mischief at once lightened in Mrs. Harley’s eyes.

‘Our last dinner, Lady Mangotsfield, before we left London, was given,’ she said, ‘in honour of Mr. Snapper.’

The shot told to perfection. Lady Mangotsfield moved back her chair with a genuine start of horror.

‘You don’t mean to say,’ she exclaimed, ‘you have actually asked him?’ Then, as if horror were a feeling far too flattering, she lowered the offence to the level of an ill-

judged joke ; and, shaking her fan at Mrs. Harley with a tremulous air of reprimand, 'If you do that again,' she said, 'I can tell you I wash my hands of you.'

That matter being settled, she turned now to Lord Aiden, and was understood to ask him if he did not agree with her that it was 'really too bad' that such a man as Mr. Snapper was 'in existence,' meaning by *existence* his being obtruded within the sphere of her notice. Lord Aiden agreed that it was. 'Nothing,' he said, 'is now what it used to be. Twenty years back such a man would have had no chance.'

'Of course,' resumed Lady Mangotsfield, we all know what *their* object is. Their one object is to abolish primogeniture ; and if ever they do that, it will of course be the ruin of England.'

Everyone hung on her clear but faltering accents, if not with conviction at all events

with curiosity, and waited for her to confide to Lord Aiden her further views of the situation. It appeared, as she went on, that it made her angry rather than apprehensive. What is commonly spoken of as the growing power of democracy, she seemed to regard as an outburst of passing popular naughtiness. The people, in her eyes, was a child with a fit on it of impertinence and perversity; and the best punishment its natural leaders could inflict on it was not to notice it till it had grown obedient and good again. Real political life was still confined to the old families; and political knowledge, as much as herds of deer, was secluded in the precincts of country gentlemen's parks. Lord Aiden, as he listened to her, had a quiet cynical smile; but, all the same, he listened with obvious sympathy. He inclined to her view of things much as he inclined to Catholicism. It was not true; but no other view was tolerable.

‘By the way,’ said Carew to Lady Mangotsfield as soon as she had finished her politics, ‘you said just now you heard of my being here from a stranger. May we know who the stranger was?’

‘That,’ said Lady Mangotsfield, ‘is the very point on which you must enlighten me. You know him quite well. He assured me he was a great friend of yours. His name—what was his name, now? Upon my word I can’t recollect it. It was not one that conveyed any idea to my mind.’

‘Who,’ said Carew, ‘introduced him to you?’

‘Who introduced him to me? Why, oddly enough, Stonehouse did. I was sitting in my carriage at the band, and Stonehouse had just left me, when I saw this gentleman go suddenly up and whisper to him; and then, after a moment or two, Stonehouse came back to the carriage again, and in his



queer little precise voice—so like in that he is to his dear father—“ Aunt Hilda,” he said, “ will you allow me to introduce to you a——” ah, I have it now—“ will you allow me to introduce to you a Mr. Inigo, who is dying to pay his respects to you ? You’d better know him. I think he’ll very likely amuse you.” I suppose—I don’t know—but I suppose, that I drew back a little ; for Stonehouse said, “ You needn’t be frightened of him. I assure you he won’t bite.” He’s always so droll, is Stonehouse. Well, the long and the short of it was, this Inigo was brought up to me, and before I knew where I was, he was telling me some long story about the Grand Duke, and how anxious he was to see me. God bless the man, I thought, I didn’t want to be told that. I had been with the Grand Duke nearly all the morning already. However, that’s not the point. The point is that I heard you were

here from Mr. Inigo : and now I want you to tell me, if you can, who this Mr. Inigo is.'

'How like Stonehouse !' exclaimed Miss Consuelo Burton, who, though rather in awe of Lady Mangotsfield, was overcome by her sense of amusement. 'He played just the same trick on us.'

'What, my dear ?' said Lady Mangotsfield sharply. 'Lord Aiden, what was it this young lady said ?'

'Stonehouse,' said Miss Consuelo, 'finds Mr. Inigo rather an affliction ; and he thinks it a joke sometimes to introduce him to other people.'

Lady Mangotsfield reflected for a moment on who Stonehouse was—her own nephew, and his father's eldest son ; so she decided on being slightly amused, and said, 'It was very naughty of him. But come—you have

none of you yet told me who the gentleman is. Is he a gentleman ? That's what I want to get at.'

'I,' said Carew, 'have an exceedingly slight acquaintance with him, but he's become lately a sort of gentleman-in-waiting to my Uncle Horace, who is less fastidious than he used to be, as his sight and hearing are failing him, and who finds Mr. Inigo useful to play whist with him, and even on occasions to write out invitations to dinner.'

'Well, Evelyn,' said Lady Mangotsfield to Mrs. Harley, 'and what do you say of this wonder ?'

'He's far too fashionable,' said Mrs. Harley, 'for me to be intimate with ; so I, for one, can hardly venture on an opinion.'

'Nonsense, my dear,' said Lady Mangotsfield ; 'how can you say such a thing ? The man's not fashionable, else I should have

heard of him. But you all seem to know him. Has he any position of his own?'

'Yes,' said Harley, 'he certainly has *one*. His position is at the top of every staircase in London he can get to.'

'And,' said Carew, 'if you don't think that makes him a gentleman, I can only say that your opinion is very different from his.'

Lady Mangotsfield could appreciate many things, but not a tone of banter when it happened to be addressed to herself. 'Our friend here,' she said, turning again to Mrs. Harley, 'should not talk about things which he does not understand. I can only say that if this Mr. Inigo is the fashion, fashion is very much changed from the thing that it was in my day. Besides, even in my day this was always true—the men who were seen everywhere were the men who were sought for nowhere. And you, Consuelo — when

you're going about to your parties—I'll tell you one thing, and remember an old woman told it to you—when a man of fashion is not a gentleman, there is no one in the world so vulgar as a man of fashion.'





## CHAPTER V.



O sooner had Lady Mangotsfield retired, which she did before any of the others showed any symptoms of weariness, than Carew went to one of the windows, and looked out at the night. The curtains, as he drew them aside, let in a flood of moonlight. Then with permission he threw the window open ; and the moonlight was followed by a warm fresh odour of orange-blossoms. By this time the others were all standing close to him ; and the vision that met their eyes was so alluring and brilliant that hats and cloaks were sent for, and they all of them went outside.

Right below the window was the old moat of the château, with a little bridge crossing it to the broad ramparts beyond. The moat was nothing now but a sunken cincture of orange trees ; and the ramparts had been turned into a terrace from which the whole landscape was visible. To this terrace they passed. They had stood there the night before, and the same hills fronted them that had been alive with fiery flowers and fountains. But the moon then had been hidden behind a thick bank of clouds ; everything near and far had been lost or blurred in obscurity, and their minds and eyes had been occupied almost exclusively by the numbers of people, and the bewildering blaze of the fireworks. Now everything looked so wholly different that they could hardly believe it was really the same scene ; and for a time they were almost silent before its fantastic beauty.

The sides of the tall tower, as it rose



soaring and solitary, had a strange gleam on them, and showed traces of Moorish ornament. By common consent they all moved slowly towards it. Around its base, and again below the ramparts, the tops of unfamiliar palm trees made feathery arches in the air, as though they were exotics which grew here in some magic summer. Mysterious gardens, too, which none of the guests had visited, were now seen to descend all that side of the hill ; and here and there, as peering eyes looked down on them, far in the depths was a white glimmer of flowers, or a winding gravel walk, that shone like a thread of silver ; whilst farther away the mountains, woods, and villages, the terraced olive-yards, and the keen crags above them, were at once so clear and faint, at once so brilliant and so shadowy, that they looked less like a real landscape than a reflection in a sorcerer's mirror.

‘ Why should we walk ? ’ said Lady Chisle-

hurst, presently. 'We are all wrapped up. There are seats. What does everyone say to sitting down?'

The suggestion proved welcome, and the group settled themselves pensively.

'Thank God,' murmured Lord Aiden at last, 'we can forget politics here.'

Lady Chislehurst looked at him with an expression of motherly sadness. 'My dear Lord Aiden,' she said, 'if I may make a personal speech, it's a pity that you ever took to politics at all. The world would have gained if you had never deserted poetry.'

There were many reasons why, as uttered by her, these few words had a special effect on her hearers, and came to them charged with the weight of many associations. Lady Chislehurst, it was known, had had her own private history; through the breath of scandal having never presumed to touch her, it had always remained for the world a respectful and vague

conjecture. In early life she had possessed uncommon attraction; and she had enjoyed the credit of having broken numerous hearts, without the discredit of having ever designed to do so; but, though she had twice made a devoted and blameless wife, having found herself at forty for a second time a widow, there was still a legend about her that, in the breaking of hearts and the mending of them, one alone had been broken really; and that one was hers. It has been said that she had read much. She had also written something. She was known to have been the authoress of an anonymous volume of poems, of which George Sand had said in her old age that it recalled to her the saddest and the purest feelings of her youth; and many observers of Lady Chislehurst's sympathy with sorrow were convinced that she could only have learnt it from sorrow and desolation of her own.

Lord Aiden was fully aware of the character of the woman who had spoken to him; and by no means the sort of man, under ordinary circumstances, to submit to a reproach or even advice in public, he replied to Lady Chislehurst with a frank and reflective simplicity, which might have been almost called humble had it been a little less indolent.

‘I,’ he said, ‘didn’t desert my poetry. Quite the contrary: my poetry has deserted me. Even if I had not lost the ability, I have lost the impulse to write.’

‘And doesn’t it,’ said Miss Consuelo Burton, ‘come back to you on a night like this?’

Lord Aiden was touched by the interest in the girl’s luminous eyes. ‘The impulse,’ he answered, ‘to think poetry may come back, but the impulse to write it, never. I suppose,’ he went on, in a more cynical tone, ‘that we may venture to admit, in Lady Mangotsfield’s

absence, that in more ways than one this *is* a democratic age : and what has silenced me is the growth of the reading public. The sense of private life is completely taken away from one ; and to write poetry now would be much the same, to my mind, as discussing one's private affairs at a *table d'hôte* or in a railway carriage.'

' Besides that,' said Harley, with his usual geniality, ' the world, or at least civilizations, when they grow to a certain age, lose their voices, as men do. Europe is too old for poetry ; America is too young.'

' No, no,' said Lady Chislehurst, ' it is not the age of Europe that is the matter with us. My dear Mr. Harley, the world is old enough, but to each new heart it is still as young as ever. The first time that a girl loves, to-day, love is as fresh to her as it was to Eve in Eden.'

' Yes,' said Carew, ' there are many things in life—many things and thoughts, let them

be never so often talked about, which, until we have learnt to realize them, are as strange and unknown as death.'

'You, Lord Aiden,' said Mrs. Harley after a pause, 'once wrote a poem in which you said something just like that. You said—do you remember?—that "Death was as strange as love."'

'Did I?' he said, with a little contemptuous laugh, common to poets when their own works are alluded to. 'I believe I did, now that you come to remind me of it. I forget the name of the critic who once pointed out that nearly every simile had the makings in it of two: and that, like a coat, if you turned it, you could make a new one.'

'Yes,' said Carew, 'and often one just as good. The other day, I was driving along the Corniche road, and there constantly kept recurring to me a line or a phrase of Tennyson, in which he describes the very waters

that were under me as “bays, the peacock’s neck in hue.” No simile could be more perfect or beautiful ; but if you wished to describe a peacock, it would be just as perfect inverted ; and you might say that the peacock’s neck was the colour of a Mediterranean bay.’

‘That,’ said Mr. Stanley, ‘is perfectly true ; and the simile helps the imagination as much in one case as in the other. It’s an odd thing, but it is so.’

‘I think,’ said Lord Aiden, growing gradually more animated, ‘I think that the explanation of it is this. The mind at rest is full of vivid images, which have settled on it everywhere like a flock of brilliant and quick-eyed birds ; but the moment we approach any one of them, and set about examining it carefully, its wings are spread, and with one flash it is gone. But when we employ a simile to illustrate anything, the thing which we want to illustrate acts as a kind of



stalking-horse, and the image which is to illustrate it is caught before it knew we were near it.'

'My dear Lord Aiden,' exclaimed Lady Chislehurst, 'you are still a poet at heart. As you were speaking this last moment, one would have thought you were your old self again. Do you remember at Vienna, many years ago, one pleasant night when you recited one of your poems to us? Recite us one now, if you never mean more to publish any. Do; and let me live over old times again.'

'Ask Carew,' said Lord Aiden; 'he's a better poet than I am; and a wiser one, too, for he never published at all.'

'Come, Mr. Carew,' said Lady Chislehurst. 'Doesn't this scene inspire you?'

'This scene,' said Carew, 'or this country, is the only thing that for many years past ever *has* inspired me. Would you really like to



Oh, my land of the palm, olive, and  
                    aloe ! land of the sun, the sea !  
Still my heart is a child's, turning in  
                    long longing to thee, to thee !

Carew was sitting next to Miss Consuelo Burton, and the consciousness that she was listening gave a depth and feeling to his intonation, which endowed the verses with a merit which was possibly not their own. After they had been accorded a fitting acknowledgment, Lord Aiden was again beset by Lady Chislehurst with entreaties that he would follow Carew's good example, and give them something, if only a few lines, of his own. This time he proved to be more open to persuasion. A sense of intimacy gradually had sprung up amongst them all. A tone now seemed natural that half an hour ago would have been singular, and Lord Aiden yielded to the spirit of the moonlight and the moment.

‘Here,’ he said, ‘is the last thing I have written. It is not published, and it will not be. Like Carew’s, it was written in answer to a friend’s request, who was good enough some time since to wish to have my autograph—a gifted and beautiful woman,’ he went on, speaking into the collar of his coat, and brushing some cigarette ash off the fur of it, ‘who was suffering from the most unfeminine of all our modern maladies—a want of belief in any future existence. What I wrote for her was this:

Far in a doubtful world I place my treasure,  
And in this near world you :  
But will you find that your world gives you pleasure ?  
Or I, that mine is true ?

‘My dear Lord Aiden,’ said Lady Chislehurst presently, ‘shall I tell you why your Muse has deserted you?’ and she smiled at him with a look of benignant—of almost condescending interest. ‘It is because you have

lost faith. That is the simple reason. You can't sing of your treasure unless you are certain that your treasure exists.'

'Surely,' said Miss Consuelo, with a slight sense of perversity, 'men did so in the days of the Renaissance.'

'Their case,' interposed Carew, 'was very different to ours. They may have been doubtful, or even careless about the old treasure; but their life was vivid with the illusion that they were finding a new one.'

'I,' murmured Miss Consuelo Burton half audibly, 'have not——'

There she stopped short. Only Carew heard her. He looked round at her, and in a low tone asked, 'What did you say?'

'Nothing—nothing,' she answered. Again he whispered, 'Tell me.' She paused for a moment, took one hasty glance at him, and then, in a voice lower than ever, spoke: 'I

was going to say that I had not even the comfort of the illusion.'

'You, Mr. Carew,' Lady Chislehurst was meanwhile proceeding, 'you, I know, are on my side. You agree with me, don't you, in what I have just told Lord Aiden?'

'My dear Lady—my dear friend,' said Lord Aiden, 'we agree with you one and all of us. Apart from religion, I can conceive of no good in life; and of only one evil—I mean democratic progress. But we none of us have any religion—our want is precisely that.'

'I think,' said Mr. Stanley with an odd half-humorous smile, 'I think, Lord Aiden, your generalization is a little too sweeping. You forget that three of us here to-night are Catholics.'

'And Mr. and Mrs. Harley,' said Lady Chislehurst, 'are very excellent Protestants. I can only hope that I shall see them some-

thing better some day.' Harley, on hearing this, laughed to himself somewhat, as Sarah did behind the tent door ; but Lady Chislehurst, though angelic in many respects, could not hear like the angel ; and continued quite unruffled : ' There's one thing,' she said, ' about which I am quite sure. If we all of us try to find the truth, we certainly shall find it ; and if we all of us help each other, we shall find it still more quickly.'

Carew looked at her with an odd expression on his face, and then said abruptly, ' Will you join my Society ?'

' What Society is that ?' said Lady Chislehurst with an inquiring softness.

' A Society of people whose one link together is the wish to find the truth, as you say they are sure to find it.' And Carew proceeded to explain at sufficient length the project which already he had confided to Mrs. Harley. He was altogether surprised at the



result of his communication. He was surprised at the quickness with which Lady Chislehurst grasped his idea, and the enthusiasm with which she entertained it. Even to his own mind, a moment ago it had been little more than a dream ; but now that it had been seized on by hers, it seemed suddenly to have become a reality.

‘ Let us found your Society to-night,’ she said, ‘ and let us join it, one and all of us.’

Harley for a moment sounded a mild note of discord by observing that Lady Chislehurst could hardly be a seeker for truth, because, according to her own principles, she possessed it. But Mr. Stanley at once replied to this :

‘ I, at any rate, must claim to be numbered amongst the seekers. Faith is a compass, and the object of faith is fixed ; but human society is as unfixed as the sea. Winds affect it, mists obscure it, and it is crossed at times

by currents which we call, or miscall, progress. Often, the more faith we put in the compass the more anxious shall we be as to how to sail and steer by it.'

'In that way,' said Mrs. Harley gravely, 'I am sure we must all agree with you. Putting aside the religious beliefs which we do not share, I feel as fully as Mr. Stanley does the perplexities which we do share. Yes—I too am one of the seekers—I am one of those who require both help and knowledge.'

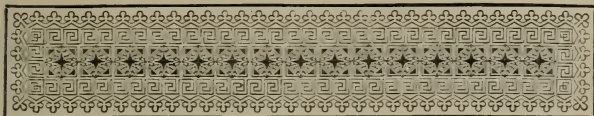
Miss Consuelo Burton drooped her head as she murmured, 'Of whom I am chief.'

'Well,' said Lady Chislehurst, 'let us consider that we have made a beginning, and before our party breaks up here we must make some arrangement with regard to our next meeting. I don't know, I'm sure, what everybody's plans may be, but I should suggest, let us meet at Rome at Easter. However, as to that, we have some days before us

to think about it, and who knows meanwhile what conclusions we may not have come to. We shall expect our host,' she went on, with her most benignant smile at Carew, 'we shall expect our host to be a host indeed, and to give his ideas to us as well as his hospitality. He must tell us a little more how he himself approaches the problem.'

'To-morrow,' said Carew, 'I shall perhaps be able to show you. Part of the secret is hidden in this château.'





## CHAPTER VI.



LITTLE did the guests, as they took themselves off to bed, expect what the morrow was going to bring forth. Carew's last words, indeed, had roused in them some slight expectation ; it had also been arranged that they should do what they had not done yet—go round the house and see all its curiosities thoroughly. But events were in store for them far more startling than these, and quite as startling to Carew himself as to anybody.

The morning, however, passed off calmly enough. This was spent in the promised

tour of sight-seeing, which had been specially arranged in honour of Lady Mangotsfield, as that afternoon she meant to return to Nice. She found that the château even more than answered her expectations ; and, with one exception, she was in high good humour with everything. This exception was supplied by the chapel. But it was not the structure or the associations of the chapel itself that disturbed her : it was the sight of Lady Chislehurst's maid, who was discovered in the act of arranging on the altar two tall silver candlesticks, taken from her mistress's bedroom, whilst the floor at her feet was littered with leaves and flowers.

Carew, as the scene burst upon the party entering, observed how Miss Consuelo Burton glanced for a moment at Lady Chislehurst, first with a smile in her eyes, and then a half-contemptuous irritation. Lady Chislehurst, meanwhile, quite unconscious of this,

was saying to Carew in her sweetest and most beatified accents : ‘ How much nicer it looks now, doesn’t it ? I couldn’t bear to think of its being left as I found it yesterday evening.’ Lady Mangotsfield heard the words, and took in the whole situation perfectly ; but it was often her way, when she felt displeased at anything, to affect an extreme deafness ; and turning to Carew with a slight sharpness in her voice, ‘ What,’ she said, ‘ have you got going on here ? Is that young woman going to hang up a mistletoe bough ?’ Carew murmured an explanation, which contained the name of Lady Chislehurst. ‘ Oh,’ said Lady Mangotsfield, raising her eyebrows, ‘ Lady Chislehurst !’ That was her only answer. It was given in the mildest tone, and accompanied by the mildest smile, but the smile and the tone between them seemed somehow to fill the atmosphere with a delicate but unmistakable essence of

politely-pitying Protestantism. Lady Chislehurst was more conscious of this than anyone. She was, however, quite equal to the occasion ; and her own pity, which rose at a moment's notice, was more than a match for that of her antagonist. ' Yes, dear Lady Mangotsfield,' she said, very much as if she were an angel instructing a child, ' there is going to be Mass said here to-morrow morning. To-morrow is Sunday, and a feast of one of the Church's saints.'

' Sunday, my dear !' retorted Lady Mangotsfield, ' yes, of course it's Sunday. As I always do when I'm at Nice, I shall go and hear Mr. Fothergill. Come, Mr. Carew, we'll look at the kitchens now.'

But it little availed her to cover her retreat thus. Lady Mangotsfield felt that Lady Chislehurst was the victor, and she was made to feel it again more than once afterwards. Lady Chislehurst, however, fought,



when she did fight, simply and solely by the extra vigour of her sweetness. Her charity and her conversation became like a douche of balm, administered with a force just sufficient to make them sting.

‘It strikes me,’ said Lady Mangotsfield at luncheon, ‘that you were all of you very late in getting to bed last night. What were you all doing?’

‘We were out on the terrace,’ said Lord Aiden, ‘talking and quoting poetry.’

‘We were doing more than that,’ said Lady Chislehurst, leaning graciously towards Lady Mangotsfield; ‘we were founding a Society.’

‘Eh? What?’ said Lady Mangotsfield, shielding herself again behind her buckler of deafness. ‘What does she say, Lord Aiden?’ Lord Aiden informed her. ‘Well,’ she continued, ‘and your Society, what is it to do, pray?’

‘Dear Lady Mangotsfield,’ said Lady Chislehurst, ‘it is to find, and to clear the way to, a recognition of a Catholic truth.’

‘It’s a Society, then, is it, to make you all turn Roman Catholics?’

‘If you like it, Lady Mangotsfield, we will drop the word *Catholic*, and call it merely a Society for the recognition of truth. It is going to be joined by many of the keenest intellects in London.’

Carew and his friends stared at Lady Chislehurst, nor did their wonder lessen as they listened to what followed. ‘We are going,’ she continued, ‘to have the Duke of Angmering with us, Lady Carlton, Lady St. George, the Cardinal, the Duke of Renfrew, and the Prime Minister—everyone, in fact, whose opinions ought to be influential.’

‘Then, in that case,’ said Lady Mangotsfield, ‘your Society will be an exceedingly small one.’

‘Its members,’ said Lady Chislehurst, ‘are to have one qualification, at least, which you, dear Lady Mangotsfield, are quite sure to approve of. They are to be all of them ladies and gentlemen.’

This information, no doubt, was in itself conciliating, and several of the names just mentioned were those of personages Lady Mangotsfield held high in honour; but, at the same time, the Society, if it meant anything, must, she felt, be a species of Popish plot, and the very fact of its being talked of affected her as some affront to herself.

‘Well,’ she said, with an odd perversity of temper, ‘if you mean your members to be all ladies and gentlemen, I should advise you as soon as possible to elect Mr.—what’s his name—Mr. Inigo. I dare say I shall see him at Nice, and if so I shall tell him all about you all. Eh, John? What’s this? How did this come?’

These last words were addressed to her footman, who had been standing behind her chair, with a silver tray in his hand, waiting for the first moment when he might venture to tender to her a letter.

‘The post-chaise,’ he said, ‘has just come for your Ladyship, and this is a letter that was sent by Dr. Williamson.’

Dr. Williamson was Lady Mangotsfield’s own doctor, who had lived in her house for the last twenty years, and generally travelled with her to attend to her health and to her travelling-rugs. She glanced at the letter rapidly, and then, as if slightly disturbed by it, ‘John,’ she said, ‘tell my maid to come to me. Let her go into the drawing-room. I will come in there to speak to her.’

She had hardly risen and reached the door, when Carew, who was holding it open for her, was addressed by a servant also, and for him too there was a tray with a missive

lying upon it. Moreover, like Lady Mangotsfield, he seemed slightly disturbed by receiving it; and murmuring some excuse to his guests, he likewise left the dining-room.

‘It’s exactly,’ said Lord Aiden, ‘like a scene in a Greek play. First comes one messenger, then another. But, my dear Lady,’ he added, turning to Lady Chislehurst, ‘our Society, according to you, is far larger than we had any idea of.’

‘I’ve no doubt,’ said Lady Chislehurst with the frankest smile imaginable, ‘I’ve no doubt that Henry Renfrew and all the others would join us. Nothing is wanting but for me to write and ask them; and even if we decide on keeping our Society to ourselves, it will have done Lady Mangotsfield good to hear what we just told her. It will have woke her up a little. She is,’ Lady Chislehurst added, pausing for a word, and almost making it classical by the apologetic hesitation

which prefaced it, 'she is such an old stick-in-the-mud.'

A slight smile in a moment or two flickered on every lip, for Lady Mangotsfield almost directly returned again, and having called for some rice pudding that had been specially made for her, informed the company that her departure had been put off till to-morrow, her doctor having forbidden her to drive when the wind was east. 'And where's our host,' she said. 'I must tell him he'll have to keep me.'

Carew, however, did not return to the table, and in a very few minutes a message was brought from him to Mrs. Harley, begging that she would be good enough to go out and speak to him on the ramparts.

She at once rose, and hardly knowing what to expect, she found him with all the air of a man in some great perplexity.

'Do you remember,' he exclaimed, as he

went forward to meet her, 'how I told you in my letter that I had perhaps a surprise in store for you?'

'You did,' she said. 'But I thought we had had it already—your plays, your fireworks, your musicians, and your Legitimist duchesses.'

'No, no,' said Carew, 'what I meant was something quite different. In a few hours time, who do you think will arrive here?'

There was something in his tone which made Mrs. Harley look at him anxiously. 'I can't conceive,' she said. 'I hope it's no one very alarming. Tell me, who is it?'

Carew kept her in suspense for a few moments, and then said, 'Mr. Foreman.'

Astonishment, incredulity, and something nearly akin to consternation were visible on Mrs. Harley's face.

'Mr. Foreman!' she echoed. 'Never—you can't possibly mean it!'



‘ I do though,’ said Carew, ‘ and I only wish I didn’t. The mine has exploded sooner than I intended. Listen a moment, and I’ll tell you how it happened. For the last few years Foreman has known my name. Several of his statements I have exposed in the papers, and he and I, in that way, have had more than one passage-at-arms together. We have also exchanged one or two private letters. Well, as you know, I heard from you that he was at Nice ; and my first impulse when you told me so, putting aside his illness, would have been to kick him rather than seek his company. But several things were said that night which I thought over afterwards. I was struck by the interest which the mention of him and his views seemed to excite in our friend Miss Consuelo Burton ; and to make a long story short, the morning after I dined with you—in fact, just before I paid you my early visit—I had a little surreptitious

interview with him, and hardly thinking that he would dream of accepting my invitation, I suggested that whilst you were with me he should come over and meet you here.'

'Indeed,' said Mrs. Harley, still aghast at the news. 'He said nothing about it to me. And did you tell him who else would be here?'

'If he did come,' said Carew, 'I suggested that his day should be Monday. Lady Chislehurst would by that time have been gone, and I never really looked on Miss Consuelo's presence as a possibility. But somehow or other, he can't have understood me properly, for a terrible telegram which has just arrived informs me that our gentleman will be with us this afternoon.'

Mrs. Harley looked down meditatively. 'It's an awkward thing, I admit,' she said; and she tapped the gravel with the tip of a dainty boot.

'My great difficulty, you see,' said Carew,

‘is this. What will be said to the meeting by Miss Consuelo’s sisters by-and-by? And what will be said to it by Lady Chislehurst now? As for Aiden, it will amuse him; and he will do his best to make things go smoothly.’

‘And Mr. Stanley?’ said Mrs. Harley.

‘He will be more than amused. If I know him at all he will be interested. Indeed he is my chief hope. My fear is that Foreman may say something violent; that he may horrify Lady Chislehurst; and that in addition to a scene at the moment, she may make mischief afterwards. There they are at the window—Aiden and Lady Chislehurst both. If I could only catch his eye, I’d get him to come out and speak to us.’ He at last did what he wished to do, and Lord Aiden emerged. ‘My dear fellow,’ cried Carew, ‘for pity’s sake come and console me. I’ve a live Socialist coming here this afternoon—

that animal Foreman who spouts revolution in the parks. Please support me by telling me that you don't much mind meeting him.'

Lord Aiden for a second looked just a trifle annoyed ; but he then said carelessly, 'Not I—I shall like it. A little variety is always rather amusing. I believe, by the way, this is a person of some education.'

'Dear, yes,' said Mrs. Harley. 'He was the Fellow of a College at Cambridge.'

'See,' said Carew, 'here come all the others—Miss Consuelo, Frederic Stanley, and Lady Chislehurst. They're not coming near us, but I had best call them. Now for it—I must break the news to her ladyship. You see us, Lady Chislehurst,' he said, 'in rather a troubled conclave. A guest is going to arrive whom I had not at all expected, and whom, I fancy, some of us may not like. I mean he's a roughish man, not much used to society. He's a man who spends his life in

working amongst the East End poor. In fact,' said Carew, taking courage as he proceeded, 'you may possibly know his name, as the Cardinal takes an interest in him. His name is Foreman.'

Lady Chislehurst's face beamed with inquiring graciousness. 'No,' she said, 'I don't think I can have heard of him. But anyone who interests the Cardinal is sure to be worth meeting, even if he should be a little—well—not quite like ourselves.' Suddenly, however, she seemed to recollect something. 'He surely,' she said, 'can't have anything to do with that horrible man Foreman, who is the ringleader of the East End Socialists?'

Carew, in spite of his perplexity, could not help smiling at this. He turned to Mrs. Harley, and with the frankness of utter despair, he exclaimed aloud, 'Well, now, all the fat is in the fire!'

The suspense for a moment was dreadful,

but help was almost immediate. 'I,' said Mr. Stanley, 'know the man's name well enough. Tell me, Carew : he's a disciple of Karl Marx, isn't he ?'

'He is,' said Carew.

'Then, by all means,' said Mr. Stanley, 'let us welcome him. There's nobody in the world I should like better to have a talk with.'

In Lady Chislehurst's alarm there was a sudden and miraculous lull. Still, it was with anxiety, though anxiety tempered by faith, that she asked Mr. Stanley if Socialists were not of necessity Atheists ; and added that, to judge of them from the mob she herself had encountered, they were the most sinister and desperate people she had ever seen in her life. Mr. Stanley, however, replied very coolly, 'That is probably why the Cardinal admires him for working amongst them. And as for religion, I take it the case is this : a

Socialist may be a good Christian, though hardly a very sensible man. Still,' he added, turning to Lord Aiden, 'in mere point of argument, they have a great deal to say for themselves. Did you ever read Karl Marx's treatise on "Capital?" It is the profoundest piece of imperfect reasoning that I ever met with in my life; and my only wonder is that it has not made more heretics. I allude, Lady Chislehurst,' he added, with a smile, 'to economic heretics, not to theological ones.'

Carew seemed somewhat reassured by the turn which events had taken; but suddenly with a start, 'God bless my soul!' he exclaimed, 'I ought to be going in, and seeing something of Lady Mangotsfield.'

'Oh,' said Mrs. Harley, 'my husband is with her, amusing her.'

'Yes,' said Carew, 'but she'll be off, I suppose, presently; I must be going in and paying my last civilities to her.'



A moment's silence settled on the group round him. Then Mrs. Harley said, 'What! and you haven't heard?' in a voice that made him feel there was still some disaster in store for him. 'I forgot,' she went on; 'of course you have not. Lady Mangotsfield has been asking for you, in order to let you know—that she can't go to-day, and is obliged to stop till to-morrow.'

Carew was thunderstruck. 'What!' he stammered, 'not go? Why can't she?'

'Her doctor,' said Mrs. Harley, unable to repress a smile, 'won't allow her to travel in the east wind.'

Carew looked up with a blank expression of helplessness. 'What's to be done?' he said. 'What do you think will happen? Foreman and Lady Mangotsfield meeting at one table!—Will the world go on, or the sun ever shine after it? Why was this Socialist—why was he ever born! Or why am I not

possessed of all the *droits* of a *seigneur*, that I might send some minion to meet him and have him scragged on the road?'

'I have it!' said Mrs. Harley, with a burst of unlooked-for cheerfulness. 'Leave him to me, and I'll manage him beautifully. When does he come, do you say? At any rate not till tea-time. Let me get at him before he sees Lady Mangotsfield, and I'll engage that she finds him a delightful person.'

All looked at Mrs. Harley with eyes of relief and wonder. 'Listen,' she went on to Carew. 'You proposed, I think, taking us for a drive this afternoon. Of course the dear old lady won't come, and if Foreman arrives in our absence——'

'That,' said Carew, 'will of course never do. I must stop in, and tackle him the very moment he sets foot in the precincts.'

'No,' said Mrs. Harley, 'there is no occasion for that. Before we go out I will

write him a letter, which your servants must give him before he sees anybody. Lady Mangotsfield, ten to one, will be in her own room; but even if they do meet, my letter will have made him harmless. Stay, my husband will not drive. He shall prepare Lady Mangotsfield. You may tell her that a Mr. Foreman is coming; and George shall manage the rest.'

Miss Consuelo Burton had listened to all this intently; and when by-and-by the carriages came for their drive—two carriages, which were a large barouche and a pony-cart—she found herself by design or accident in the latter, with Mr. Stanley. This arrangement was a slight disappointment to Carew, and often during the drive, he saw with a glance of envy, with what animation and earnestness she was talking to her companion. But on going home the Fates were entirely kind to him. It seemed to suit everyone that Miss

Consuelo should be faithful to the pony-cart, and Carew, in the most natural way, changed places with Mr. Stanley.

‘I little thought, Miss Burton,’ he said presently, ‘I little thought, the other evening at Nice, that a few days later I should be driving you here, and still less that I should be on the point of welcoming Foreman as a visitor. Do you know this? it was partly the interest you expressed in him that made me think of asking him if he would come to me. Are you pleased at the thought of seeing him?’

‘I am,’ she said gravely, with downcast eyes. ‘I have been talking about him to Mr. Stanley. Of the man himself I know nothing. It is his work and his views I care for.’

‘He’s a little uncouth, but perhaps you will not mind that.’

‘No,’ she said, laughing, ‘I don’t think I

shall. He might drop his h's and not be dressed for dinner, and in all probability I should not even notice it—at least it would make no matter to me.'

'Well,' said Carew, 'he's not quite so bad as that.'

'I always feel,' she went on, pursuing her own line of thought, 'that anyone can meet anyone with ease, whatever their social distance, when they meet upon points that are of equal concern to both. In a relation like that it is absurd to feel any difference, as in any other it is to affect equality. Besides, if Mr. Foreman is a little rough, he will be all the more of a change from Lady Chislehurst.'

'I saw,' said Carew, 'when we went into the chapel this morning, your look of amusement at the signs of Lady Chislehurst's zeal. I was amused myself—I confess it; and yet—will you let me say it to you?—I was shocked at seeing that my amusement was shared by

you. Yes,' he went on, when he found that she did not speak ; ' by you, whose position is so far other than mine. I know I should feel, if that altar meant to me even a tithe of what it, of course, must mean to you, that no act of homage done to it, supposing it done sincerely, could be really ridiculous, no matter how ill-judged. Perhaps you laugh at the dolls' frocks and the tinsel that the Italian peasant delights to see on the Madonna. I don't laugh ; the tinsel to him is beautiful : and his doll is to me like a child's half-articulate hymn. But perhaps it is natural that you should treat things as you do. Everyone knows that man must live by food, but food is a jest to those who have never known famine.'

'What!' she exclaimed, 'and am I altogether a riddle to you ? I'm stupid, I know, whenever I try to explain myself ; but still, with your cleverness, I thought you might

have seen something. I can as little understand why you are not a Catholic as you can understand why I am not satisfied with Catholicism. There—did you hear that? There I go again, saying just what I don't mean. I had better not talk at all, or else I shall give you scandal. Mr. Stanley knows my meaning—at least I think he does. But you—how shall I put it to you?' She was silent for some moments, and then she broke out abruptly, 'The world is changing, and the Church stands apart from the change.'

'What change?' said Carew.

'Oh, I don't know,' she said hurriedly. 'At least I can't describe it to you. It is the change we were talking of last night at dinner. I feel it. It is in the streets; it is everywhere. It must come, and we must take our part in it.'

'Well?' said Carew, as she was silent, though evidently still wishing to speak.



‘ And what,’ she went on at last, with a sound like a stifled sob, ‘ what has the Mass got to do with this ? It might have so much, but at present it has nothing. It distracts us from our duty ; it does not nerve us to follow it. What right have I to be listening to the singing of angels, when outside the chancel wall are the groans of the crowded alley ? Often, often, often, when I have heard the organ playing, “ Hang the organ ! ” I have thought ; “ let me listen to the crying of the children ! ” Think of this ; it is a scene I shall always remember. I used once to go to lectures at the Royal Institution ; and arriving one night at the door, I saw through a lower window two professors, discussing what apparently was a fossil. I see their faces now—grand intellectual faces, full of what I suppose it is right to call elevation. And just outside, only a few paces away from them, were two

cabmen, quarrelling over a pot of beer. What two different worlds were there side by side ; and what good did the higher do to the lower ? Look at me—do you think I am worldly ? Perhaps you don't ; but I am. I am fond of dress, I am fond of gaiety, I am fond of admiration. I have everything in my nature that I ought not to have ; and yet my one wish at one time was to enter a convent : I believe, too, that I had a vocation. But now,' she said, clasping her hands, and speaking with a nervous earnestness, ' I could never endure that I shall never again feel, till I learn how to work for others, that it is more than solemn child's-play to be feathering my own spiritual nest.'





## CHAPTER VII.



THE pony-cart reached the château before the large carriage; and Carew, having exchanged a few words with the *concierge*, turned to Miss Consuelo Burton and said, 'The great prophet has come. Let us wait here for Mrs. Harley. I have sent for her husband, and before we meet Foreman it is absolutely necessary that we all have a conclave.'

'I suppose,' said Miss Consuelo, who had recovered her usual spirits, 'he will not have hoofs and a tail. If I must confess the truth, I am beginning to get nervous.'

The others arrived presently ; and at almost the same moment Harley emerged from the house, with a smile of subdued amusement. His wife hurried up to him ; they had a brief consultation, and then, at Carew's request, the whole party, with all the feelings of conspirators, retired into a disused room facing that of the *concierge*.

‘ Well? ’ said Carew, and he paused, turning to the Harleys, as if to indicate that it was they who were looked to for instruction.

‘ Everything has happened,’ said Mrs. Harley, ‘ just as I hoped it would. There is only one thing that we must remember to do, and that is to avoid certain subjects. Let us keep as clear as we can of property and the wrongs of the poor ; and if we must talk politics let it be party politics only. Foreman is an enthusiast, and, like most enthusiasts, he has a temper almost as bad as a naughty child's in a nursery. Social

politics might bring us to grief in a moment. He might fire up at a phrase ; his eyes would roll and glitter, and we should have him exploding as if he were a packet of dynamite. But keep him on party politics, and all will go more than well.'

Everyone saw that there was something else to come ; and after a slight pause Mrs. Harley went on again.

' You will, I dare say, be amused and surprised to hear that Foreman at one time either was or thought he was a Conservative ; and if he had not been snubbed by some of the understrappers of the party, he would have been prophesying the millenium in the capacity of a Conservative candidate. Well, on one point he is still as sound as ever, and that is his contempt for the Liberal, above all for the Radical, party. Let us keep him on that, and his words will be music to Lady Mangotsfield. There is, however, one

preliminary difficulty. He is not very polished and not very compromising in his ways, and Lady Mangotsfield would be wondering who this strange person was, and why he should be presuming to have any opinions at all. Now, it so happened that during his Conservative days he had several conversations on the labour question with Lord B——, and Lord B—— really listened to him with a great deal of attention. I have therefore got George, whilst we have been out driving, to recount and, so far as he could without imperilling his soul, to magnify this incident to Lady Mangotsfield; and the result is, that when she sees Foreman this evening she expects to meet someone, having an historical interest, as a specimen of Lord B——'s sagacity in detecting genius beneath an uncouth exterior.'

'I told her, too,' added Harley—'and it is just as well to say that we have really not

been obliged to go beyond the truth—I told her that Foreman's chief and most bitter opponents, at the time when he was anxious to come forward as a candidate for Marylebone, were the big shopkeepers and the vestry men. “Ah!” she said, “what a pity that things are changed! In the good times we might have easily found a borough for him.”

‘And where is he now?’ said Carew.

‘In the room where the tea is,’ said Harley, ‘counting the tea-cups, and wondering who's going to drink out of them.’

‘Listen!’ said Mrs. Harley; ‘whilst you are all of you getting your things off, I will go to him and stroke him the right way a little. I told him in my note something of what we should expect of him; and unless unhappily his temper should get the better of him, he has a certain sense of humour, and will fall in with our plans.’

She had not apparently indulged in any



exaggerated promises ; and when the rest of the party—all except Lady Mangotsfield—met together again, about half an hour afterwards, they found that she and Carew had the Socialist tame in a chair, and were between them offering tea and cake to him. He was a man of perhaps forty, with a broad forehead and quick but genial eyes, and though there was a coarseness in the actual shape of his features, and a certain wildness in his bushy moustache and beard, his expression was intellectual and by no means without refinement. The only immediate sign of any divergence in him from common good breeding was a certain easiness and want of deferent distance in his manner of acknowledging his introduction to the various strangers. For the rest, there was little to distinguish him from any average man who, without many social advantages, had been brought up at a university. There was little, and yet there

was one thing. This was a certain air as if he were something or somebody—as if he possessed, or at least represented, a power, which it quietly amused him to see that the others but half realized.

Nothing could be better than the way in which matters began. Lord Aiden shook hands with him humanely, as if he were some zoological curiosity; Mr. Stanley did so with a keener and far friendlier interest; and Miss Consuelo Burton fixed her eyes on him, as if he were a sphinx who with regard to the social riddle, not only asked, but was perhaps able to answer, it. Mrs. Harley was anxious about no one except Lady Chislehurst; and Lady Chislehurst in a moment sent all such anxiety to the winds. Graciousness hardly describes her manner as she approached Foreman. It seemed as if a flock of blessings flew out of her mouth when she spoke to him, and settled all over him, even

upon the back of his chair : nor had many sentences passed between them before she was attacking him with the magic name of the Cardinal.

‘ Yes,’ he answered, smiling, ‘ the Cardinal means well, but——’

He looked at Lady Chislehurst ; and to all but Lady Chislehurst herself the pause expressed a reserved contempt for Cardinals, far too complete to have any tincture of hostility. It was plain, however, that he had every wish to be civil ; and, clearing his throat, he added a moment afterwards : ‘ In one point at least we Socialists agree with you. The first great wrong ever done to the English people was, in our estimation, the theft of the monastic properties.’

He spoke calmly and pleasantly ; but Carew could not help observing that his hands for a second clenched themselves, as if in unconscious anger.

Lady Chislehurst was charmed with what she had heard. 'Yes, of course,' she said. 'The Church was always the best friend of the poor. Mr. Foreman, let me give you another cup of tea; and come, I must get rid of that nasty slop in your saucer for you.'

'Mr. Foreman,' interposed Mrs. Harley, 'please let me remind you that you are under a solemn compact with us not to say anything till to-morrow—Lady Mangotsfield goes to-morrow, doesn't she, Mr. Carew?—not to say anything till then about such dangerous matters as "we Socialists." And yet—George, we must ask him this before we go up to dress for dinner—tell us, Mr. Foreman, about your Socialistic candidates. He,' she added, explaining her question to the others, 'has twenty Socialist friends, who are standing at this election.'

'Yes, Foreman,' said Harley, 'tell us

about your candidates. You surely don't expect to get all of them in—or indeed any of them ?'

Mrs. Harley looked at her husband with some anxiety. 'Do let him take care,' she murmured to herself, 'or we shall be having a scene in no time !'

Foreman meanwhile had sat straight up in his chair ; and though his expression had not ceased to be friendly, a flush of excitement had mounted into his cheek, and there was a momentary glance in his eyes like a flash of faint sheet-lightning. 'No,' he said, '*I* am expecting to get in nobody : for revolutions are things that are never made by an individual—any more than they are ever stopped by one. But you are right as to twenty successes. Those I do not expect : but in the next Parliament, as sure as I sit here, the Social Revolution will have at least fifteen representatives.'

‘My dear Foreman,’ said Harley, ‘you are a master of statistical prophecy.’

‘Does anyone remember,’ said Lord Aiden, ‘what was the number of the Beast? Because I have sometimes fancied it might be the number of the existing House of Commons.’

This pleasantry seemed hugely to tickle Foreman; and he startled the company by bursting into vociferous laughter. ‘Capital!’ he gasped, as by degrees he recovered himself. ‘A middle-class House of Commons, a parliament of Japhet Snappers! I doubt if any prophet ever foresaw such a Beast as that. Allow me, however, with regard to my own Apocalypse, to say that my statistics have not been revealed to me in an ecstasy. They are based on the books of the League of Social Democrats, which allow us to test the rate at which our opinions spread.’

‘Suppose,’ said Mrs. Harley, who saw

here an opportunity for interrupting him, 'suppose you tell us about all that to-morrow; and at dinner, if you would wish to make somebody really happy, tell Lady Mangotsfield what you think of the House of Commons. By the way,' she hurried on, determined to change the conversation, which she saw had already begun to alarm Lady Chislehurst, 'talking of books, Mr. Foreman, is this book yours? I found you reading it, and I have only just seen what it was.'

'What is it?' cried several voices.

'What!' said Mrs. Harley, holding it up. 'It is one of Thackeray's novels. I'm surprised that Mr. Foreman, who wants to reform away everything, should condescend to be amused at such a trifling writer as Thackeray, whose whole view of life was confined to polite society.'

'Oh,' exclaimed Foreman, rubbing his hands, and raising his eyes to the ceiling with



a thoughtful leer of appreciation, 'Thackeray to me is delicious—absolutely and altogether delicious. He's the greatest political novelist of this or of any country. Of no party movement has there been ever so exquisite an analysis as that which forms the substance of all Thackeray's novels. It's worth all the histories of modern Radicalism put together.'

Lord Aiden eyed Foreman with a stare of tolerant curiosity ; and then turning to Harley who stood next him, 'I don't know,' he said, 'about Thackeray's politics ; but of all great novelists he is to my mind by far the most vulgar.'

'Vulgar,' replied Foreman, who caught the word, 'of course he is vulgar—gloriously vulgar!' and here he began laughing ; but his laugh was abruptly drowned by the overpowering clang of the dressing-bell.

'Mr. Foreman,' said Mrs. Harley, as they were all preparing to separate, 'you have been

talking riddles to us. At dinner we shall call on you to explain yourself. I think,' she added to Lady Chislehurst, as they were leaving the room together, 'Thackeray's novels and Mr. Snapper's iniquities ought to see us safely through the evening—at least till Lady Mangotsfield has retired.'

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

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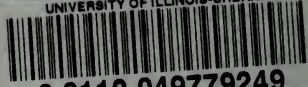








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